



# TAKINGCARE

Board of **Social** Witness

Creating a safe environment for children,  
young people, leaders and staff



Child protection guidelines  
for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland  
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# TAKING CARE TWO

CHILD PROTECTION GUIDELINES FOR  
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND

:: Protecting our Children, Young People, Leaders and Staff

:: Caring About Standards

:: Implementing Good Practice

Creating a safe environment for children, young people,  
leaders and staff within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

## PREFACE TO TAKING CARE TWO

These guidelines are the second edition of Taking Care and the fourth edition of the child protection guidelines of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The guidelines have been revised to ensure that we provide a safer environment for all our children, young people, volunteers and workers. The two substantive topics of child protection and health and safety are ever changing, thus we accept that some subject matter will change in time.

We have endeavoured to take onboard all the comments that have been made over the life of the first edition of the Taking Care guidelines. The regular 'Taking Care Updates', issued by the Taking Care Office are invaluable in giving new information and clarifying ongoing issues. The recent Taking Care audit, presented to the 2011 General Assembly was confirmation that we are on the right track, with room for improvement in some vital areas.

According to the 2010 Audit:

- ∴ 98% of congregations have a child protection policy
- ∴ 87% of congregations have child protection on their Kirk Session agenda.
- ∴ 82% of congregations said that they use the pocket leaders guide 'We care 4 U Too'
- ∴ 85% of congregations ask new leaders to complete an application form
- ∴ 74% ask new volunteers to provide references

The safeguarding of both children and vulnerable adults is now a clear priority; as a Church we provide programmes, activities, education and care to these groups. The recent public debate on the "The Big Society" has been able to establish that the churches are major players and providers in this whole area. We must continue to build on good practice, remembering that there is no "Zero Risk" – all our work involves some level of risk.

Our thanks goes to so many people. First of all to all those who invite us to provide training (approximately one hundred and thirty training events every year), to the volunteer trainers who deliver the training, to the Taking Care Committee chaired by Ronnie Orr, who oversee the Taking Care Programme and who contributed to the revision of these guidelines.

**Lindsay Conway**  
Director of Social Service

**Deborah Webster**  
Taking Care Coordinator

**September 2011**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Taking Care guidelines are divided into 13 sections. Section 1 is an introductory chapter which sets out the rationale behind the guidelines. Sections 2 through to 11 are divided into ten chapters, each focusing in on a specific area of child protection and Section 12 is a compilation of forms and resources including contact details, to help you find out more information. The final section has been left blank for you to insert copies of the 'Taking Care Update' and any other relevant information, notes or training materials.

Many readers will 'dip' in and out of relevant sections and sub-sections as and when required and so as well as a clearly set out contents page, an A to Z Index has been produced to help readers find what they are looking for. As many of the topics relate to each other, it is clearly cross referenced throughout.

Leaders and workers within the church do not have to become child protection experts but need to be made aware of the issues. We have tried to write the guidelines in such a way that it contains most of the information that leaders within the church will need to know when working with children and young people. However, many aspects of child protection do change as legislation dictates.

### Who has produced these guidelines?

Previous editions of the Taking Care guidelines were originally written by staff at the Board of Social Witness and laterally, members of the Taking Care committee. This fourth edition of the child protection guidelines and second edition of Taking Care has been revised by the Taking Care Coordinator and Secretary to the Board of Social Witness with input from the Taking Care committee.

In order to help you find your way around the guidelines, below is a series of questions and answers with references to the appropriate sections in the guidelines where more information can be found.

### What is the role of the Taking Care Office?

It is important that any child protection issue is dealt with in the best way possible. Reporting, questions and issues to do with child protection in a congregation should all be dealt with centrally at the Taking Care Office based within the Board of Social Witness of our church. Section 4 is entitled 'Areas of Responsibility' and sets out the role and obligations of the Taking Care Office as well as responsibilities of the Kirk Session and Designated Person of each congregation.

### Why do we need to have a child protection policy?

Section 1 provides four answers to the question, 'Why does the Church need a child protection policy?' - We have a legal requirement, a Biblical basis, it's for our own protection and unfortunately, we live in a sinful world and therefore need to protect our children. Section 10 sets out the relevant child protection laws in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland as well as the Data Protection Act.

**What is child abuse and how can we detect it?**

Section 2 sets out the definitions of child abuse as well as the signs by which a person may be able to tell if a child is being or has been abused.

**What does a leader in a congregation need to know about child protection?**

Section 7 considers good practice guidelines on a variety of areas from transport to working with children who have special needs. Guidelines on the use of technology and how leaders and children communicate through it can be found in Section 8.

**What do you do if you are concerned about the welfare of a child?**

Section 3 is entitled, 'Responding, Reporting And Recording' and sets out what we should do and say if we come across a child protection issue (respond), who we should tell (report) and what we should write down (record).

**How do we vet our leaders?**

The Appointment Process can be found in Section 5. It is the process by which new appointments are made of those working in the congregation's organisations, both paid and voluntary which all congregations must follow. This process includes information on police checks/Garda vetting as well as references, an interview and Kirk Session approval.

**Do we need to police check leaders who work with vulnerable adults?**

Section 11 explains that sometimes adults can be abused too, how to report if you are concerned about an adult who is vulnerable and what current practice is regarding police checking those working with vulnerable adults.

**What training does the Taking Care Office provide?**

Section 5 explains the importance of child protection training, the different types of training available and how to organise a training session for the leaders in your congregation.

**How should leaders discipline children?**

In order that an organisation runs smoothly, people must work together. This includes parents, young people and all leaders and helpers. Section 6 includes guidelines on developing a code of conduct and the importance of good discipline. Also, section 7 advises on appropriate physical contact.

**Who is responsible for risk assessment?**

Section 9 focuses on keeping everyone healthy and safe. This includes topics such as insurance, fire, first aid and risk assessment. It is very important that all organisations develop a risk assessment based on the premises they use and the activities that they offer. The risk assessment form should be completed by the leader in charge of each organisation and given to the congregation's Health and Safety representative on committee.





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This section has been left empty for you to insert copies of the 'Taking Care Update' newsletter along with any conference or training notes.

# 01

## Introduction



TAKINGCARE  
Board of **Social** Witness

[www.pcibsw.org/takingcare](http://www.pcibsw.org/takingcare)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### ::1.1 INTRODUCTION

Taking Care is the name of the child protection programme of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Our aim is to create and promote a safe environment for children, young people, leaders and staff. Our Church receives through its doors every year over one hundred and twenty thousand children and young people. We have a legal duty of care to look after these children and provide a safe environment for them as best we can.

These guidelines provide guidance to all involved in youth and children's work and ministry within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to help ensure that children and young people enjoy their activities with optimum physical safety and are free from the threat of abuse. It will also alert leaders to signs of distress which may indicate that a child has been harmed.

Each Kirk Session must appoint a Designated Person(s) for child protection, follow the recruitment and appointment process for new leaders which includes the vetting process, make sure the right number of leaders are present, make sure all leaders attend child protection training and are fully aware of the reporting process in case a child protection concern or incident were to arise.

By adopting and using these guidelines each congregation will be raising the standard of care for those entrusted to them, no matter how brief the event or small the organisation they attend. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland reaches out to children and young people throughout the island of Ireland and welcomes those from households where there is no Presbyterian or other denominational connection.



**Every congregation in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland must have adopted these guidelines and should be implementing them in all its organisations which work with children and young people, according to the General Assembly.**

### ::1.2 WHY DOES THE CHURCH NEED A CHILD PROTECTION POLICY?

There are four main reasons why we need to have a child protection policy within the Church:

#### 1. A Legal Requirement

The law rightly requires us to have a policy in place and says we have a duty of care to children and young people that we work with. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates that "children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence. They must be kept safe from harm. They must be given proper care by those looking after them".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

### Five Key Principles of Child Care

The Children (NI) Order 1995 and the Child Care Act (RoI) 1991 emphasise the following key principles:

- ∴ **Paramount Consideration** – It is a fundamental principle in child care law and practice that the welfare of the child must be the paramount consideration in decisions taken about him/her.
- ∴ **Parental Responsibility** – Parents have a responsibility to children rather than rights over them. There may be situations where other significant adults share this responsibility with one or both parents.
- ∴ **Prevention** – We should aim to prevent situations arising where children are separated from their families. The state should provide support and services to keep children within their families and communities, in order to promote their health and welfare.
- ∴ **Partnership** – The most effective way of ensuring that a child's needs are met is by working in partnership. The provision of services must therefore take into account the views of parents.
- ∴ **Protection** – Children should be safe and should be protected by intervention if they are in danger.

### 2. Biblical Basis

As well as a legal imperative, there is also a biblical one. We have our own duty of care found in the Bible. 1 Peter 5:2 says, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be". Next to proclaiming God's Word and the love of Christ, what could be more important than keeping our children safe?

### 3. Our own Protection

Taking Care is not there only to protect children and young people but leaders and staff too and ultimately the organisations of the Church. Sometimes leaders may think that aspects of the guidelines are not necessary, however it should be remembered that it is for their own protection and they should not rely on their reputation to protect them.



**By having the guidelines in place leaders and helpers will be assured of their own protection in the event of false allegations.**

### 4. The world that we live in

No denomination is immune from the problem of trusted adults misusing their position. This requires a response which is aimed at both prevention and care for those who may have been mistreated. We must not be naive to the fact that there are people in the world today who want to harm children and so we as a Church must do all that we can to protect our children, promote good practice and prevent abuse.

### ::1.3 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

A **child** is a person under 18 years old. Where either children or young people are mentioned in the guidelines, both are intended.

A **leader** is anyone 18 years old or over who is engaged in work or voluntary activity which involves regular contact with children or young persons.

A **young leader** or **helper** is a person aged between 15 and 18 years who assists in organisations working with children.

A leader in a **regulated position** is an adult working either as a volunteer or in a paid position, four or more times a year, in direct contact with children or vulnerable adults.

A **vulnerable adult\*** is anyone aged 18 or over who cannot take care of themselves. This may be because they have a mental health problem, a disability, visual or hearing problems, are old and frail, or are ill.

### ::1.4 CHILD PROTECTION POLICY



**Every congregation in the Presbyterian Church must have a child protection policy in place which is based on the Taking Care guidelines.**

The child protection policy should relate to all children and youth organisations within the Church. A child protection policy should be displayed clearly on church premises. A sample policy is found in Section 12. This sample policy should be developed to suit the congregation's individual needs and formally adopted by the Kirk Session. Each leader should be given a copy of the congregation's child protection policy and be in agreement with it.

\*This definition is from the leaflet 'Adult Abuse - Guidance for Staff', published by the Northern Ireland Office and Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in 2009.



# 102

Abuse



## 2. ABUSE

### 2.1 WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

There are many reasons why a perpetrator abuses children.



**Whatever the reason, abuse is always wrong, and it is never the child's fault. It is a fact that the majority of abusers are known to their victims.**

It is very important that abuse is stopped as soon as it is discovered for the sake of both the victim and the abuser. The sooner action is taken, the more likely it is that the abuse will stop and that the child will recover from his or her experiences.

It is not only adults who abuse children. Teenage abuse is a growing concern; this is when older children abuse younger children or their peers.

Child abuse does not refer solely to sexual abuse; there are four main types of child abuse. The following definitions of abuse are taken from, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'.<sup>2</sup> We have included some of the signs which can act as clues to tell us that abuse has taken place. This list is by no means definitive nor does it mean that if a child shows one or more of the signs they have definitely been abused.

#### Physical Abuse

**Physical abuse** may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

Signs may include:

- ⚡ Unexplained recurrent injuries or burns
- ⚡ Improbable excuses or refusal to explain injuries
- ⚡ Self-destructive tendencies
- ⚡ Fear of physical contact, a shrinking back if touched

<sup>2</sup>Working Together to Safeguard Children March 2010 (Department of Children, Schools and Families).

### Neglect

**Neglect** is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health and development.

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse.

Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- ⚡ provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- ⚡ protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ⚡ ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-takers)
- ⚡ ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment
- ⚡ it may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs

Signs may include:

- ⚡ Constant hunger
- ⚡ Inadequate clothing
- ⚡ Constant tiredness
- ⚡ Poor personal hygiene

### Emotional Abuse

**Emotional abuse** is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Signs may include:

- ⚡ Delays in physical, mental and emotional development
- ⚡ Continual belittling of oneself
- ⚡ Over-reaction to mistakes
- ⚡ Extreme fear of any new situation
- ⚡ Inappropriate response to pain
- ⚡ Neurotic behaviour

### Sexual Abuse

**Sexual abuse** involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Signs may include:

- ⚡ Sexual knowledge, including drawing sexually explicit pictures, or use of language inappropriate for the child's age
- ⚡ Being over affectionate in a sexual way that is inappropriate to the child's age
- ⚡ Regression to younger behavioural patterns such as thumb sucking
- ⚡ Self-mutilation, suicide attempts, running away, overdosing, anorexia
- ⚡ Sudden loss of appetite or compulsive eating

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### ⚡2.2 SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Young people attending church organisations are also at risk of being exposed to substance abuse. This can range from smoking to experimenting with solvents, alcohol and drugs. It is important that leaders are aware of the danger signs and include awareness training in their programme planning for high risk groups. For contact details of useful organisations in this field see Section 12.

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### ⚡2.3 DOMESTIC ABUSE AND CHILDREN

Violence against women and men in the home is a serious crime, which causes enormous health and social problems and emotional and psychological damage, not only to the victims, but also to their children. Children are often witnesses and are necessarily affected by the anxiety and personal threat to themselves. Domestic violence is the most common form of interpersonal crime and also the least reported.

Leaders should be aware that children may not only overhear or observe violence in the home, but may become direct victims, either accidentally or deliberately. The social pressures to remain within a violent home and the stigma which parents perceive in relation to living in refuges or temporary accommodation as single parents should not be underestimated. It is important for leaders of church organisations to be aware that agencies such as PSNI/An Garda Síochána and Health & Social Care Trusts have developed policies to help in situations of domestic violence and that advice, support and help are available from the Women's Aid Federation (NI & RoI). Men experiencing domestic violence may also have to seek refuge; accommodation may be available in the Simon Community (NI & RoI).

The impact of domestic violence on children can lead to physical, psychological and behavioural disorders and may subsequently affect them when they become parents. Many of these concerns will have a pastoral response from the Church.

## ::2.4 BULLYING



**All kinds of bullying are wrong and should not be tolerated within organisations of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.**

Our organisations should be a safe and welcoming place for all children. All organisations should develop a culture of openness where children and leaders feel able to say if they or their friends are being bullied.

### **What is bullying?**

The government defines bullying as, “Deliberately hurtful behaviour repeated often over a period of time”.<sup>3</sup> Bullying can happen anywhere to anyone; anyone has the potential to bully others.

### **What forms does it take?**

Bullying can be name calling or teasing. Bullying is often physical; victims are pushed, punched, kicked and hit. Victims can be forced to do things they don't want to do or are left out of games or ignored by others. Cyber bullying is when bullies contact their victims via text messaging or the internet. This often intensifies the bullying as victims have little escape from their bullies.

### **Preventative Measures**

All leaders should try to prevent bullying within their organisation. However, if it does happen, leaders must deal with it and not ignore it. All organisations are encouraged to write an anti-bullying policy based on these guidelines to suit their own needs (a sample policy is available in Section 12). Children and young people should be a part of that process. There is also an anti-bullying factsheet in Section 12 designed specifically for children.

If children are new to the group or spend a lot of time on their own, leaders should encourage others to befriend them. Having friends is one of the best defences against bullying. Leaders should always reward and acknowledge positive behaviour, especially young people who befriend others or prevent or stop bullying. Bullying should be discussed openly within the group and young people should be regularly encouraged to talk to the leaders about anything that is bothering them.

<sup>3</sup>[www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Yourchildshealthandsafety/WorriedAbout/DG\\_10015786](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Yourchildshealthandsafety/WorriedAbout/DG_10015786)

### How to deal with bullying

- ⚡ Talk to the victim(s) and find out what has happened. Reassure them that it is not their fault and they have made the right decision in telling you. Make sure they are supported throughout the process.
- ⚡ Meet with those involved. It might be suitable to discuss the issue with all members of the group, not just those who are bullying. It is not necessary to mention the victim by name. Talk about how they would feel if they were being left out/called names etc.
- ⚡ Discuss how the situation could be improved - if bullying is happening how it can be stopped and how can everyone feel happier in the group. Make sure everyone within the group is adhering to the code of conduct or anti-bullying policy. Once everyone has agreed that bullying should not take place, agree what the consequences should be if it were to continue.
- ⚡ If the bullying continues, make sure the agreed consequences are carried out.
- ⚡ If the bullying is serious, report it to the Designated Person and to parents.
- ⚡ Ensure that adequate support is in place for the one who has been doing the bullying and all attempts have been made for them to be discouraged from repeating this behaviour.
- ⚡ Keep the situation under constant review.

### ⚡2.5 SELF-HARM AND SUICIDE

Increasingly people who work with children and young people are being faced with the issue of self-harm. In very basic terms it is 'the inflicting of physical pain to mask an emotional imbalance'. Anyone in this situation needs to be supported.

In 2004 the Royal College of Psychiatrists observed, 'Deliberate self-harm is a term used when someone injures or harms themselves on purpose. Common examples include "overdosing" (self-poisoning), hitting, cutting, or burning oneself, pulling hair, or picking skin, or self-strangulation. It can also include taking illegal drugs and excessive amounts of alcohol. Self-harm is always a sign of something being seriously wrong."<sup>4</sup> Disclosure of any self-harm should never be ignored; it is a clear sign that someone needs help and that self-esteem is low. Care should always be taken in how this problem is managed and advice should be sought at all times.



**The Social Issues and Resources Committee of the Board of Social Witness have produced a leaflet on self-harm; contact the office for a copy.**

For contact details of useful organisations in this field see Section 12.

<sup>4</sup>Royal College of Psychiatrists Self Harm factsheet 26, 2004



## Suicide

Whilst self-harm does not always lead to suicide, nor do those who attempt suicide self-harm, suicide can at times be seen as the ultimate act of self-harm.



**If a young person does disclose that they have suicidal thoughts then this should be treated as a child protection issue and thus the reporting process followed.**

Leaders must be aware that if a child discloses that they are suicidal then the leaders have a duty to inform parents or make sure they are informed. As in the case of all other pastoral concerns, ensure that individuals of any age are safe and have a network of support.

Signs of suicide:

- ⌘ Withdrawing from friends and family
- ⌘ Loss of interest in usual activities
- ⌘ Signs of sadness, hopelessness and irritability
- ⌘ Making negative remarks about themselves
- ⌘ Talking or writing about suicide
- ⌘ Putting their affairs in order
- ⌘ Giving away personal items
- ⌘ A sudden change from extreme depression to appearing to cope and being calm

These signs are not definitive but are possibly some of the signs displayed by someone who is suicidal. Others may show no sign of their pain at all. The only way to address our concern is to ask.

### **What to do if you think or know that a young person is suicidal?**

- ⌘ Listen to how they feel
- ⌘ Take them seriously
- ⌘ Offer your support
- ⌘ Encourage them to seek further help ie a doctor, professional counsellor, family member or friend
- ⌘ Follow the reporting process (See Section 3.2)
- ⌘ If they appear acutely suicidal and unable to talk, it may be necessary to seek immediate help through hospital casualty department

The Social Issues and Resources Committee of the Board of Social Witness has produced a leaflet on suicide; contact the office for a copy. For contact details of useful organisations in this area see Section 12.

# 03

## Responding, Reporting & Recording

## 3. RESPONDING, REPORTING AND RECORDING

### 3.1 RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS/ACCIDENTS/CONCERNS

#### Responding to incidents and accidents

Many issues that are brought to leaders' attention are not necessarily a concern about a child's welfare or allegation of abuse but may be a minor problem, in other words, an incident or an accident. An example of an incident would be a male leader who takes a young girl home by himself without previous knowledge from or communication to parents/carers or other leaders. An example of an accident would be a teenager falling over in youth club and needing first aid treatment. It is important that leaders know how to handle problems, no matter how minor, and that they are able to respond to more serious concerns.

Youth organisations should have copies of the Accident/Incident Report form to record details of accidents and incidences. These forms should be used for the recording of accidents, incidents, injuries and any action taken. Each entry should be signed by the leader in charge. Parents/guardians should be informed in person or by phone of the accident/incident as soon as possible.

See Section 12 for Accident/Incident Report form.

#### Responding to concerns

A concern about a child may refer to an incident when a child has shown signs of abuse or there has been a disclosure of abuse by the child or another person. A concern may also refer to inappropriate or difficult behaviour that an adult has shown towards a child.

Responding to concerns must be based upon a clearly defined reporting process. Knowing what to do, who to contact and who needs to know will ensure that the incident is dealt with appropriately. The primary responsibility is to report any concern as soon as possible and ensure that the concern is taken seriously.



**If there is ever a concern that a child might be in danger then do not hesitate to contact PSNI/An Garda Síochána immediately.**

In the event of a concern that involves alleged or suspected child abuse a Report of Concern form must be completed and passed to the Designated Person or minister who should be made aware of the situation as soon as possible.

What to do and what not to do if a child discloses to you:

**Do**

- ⌘ Stay calm
- ⌘ Listen
- ⌘ Give time for the child to say what they want
- ⌘ Reassure them that they have done the right thing in telling
- ⌘ Write down what was said to you or what you observed as soon as possible
- ⌘ Write down the exact words that the child used
- ⌘ Use the Report of Concern form
- ⌘ Ensure that the Designated Person is informed without delay
- ⌘ In the event of a serious concern do not hesitate to contact the Taking Care Office and appropriate advice will be given

**Don't**

- ⌘ Do not panic
- ⌘ Do not make a child repeat the story unnecessarily
- ⌘ Do not promise to keep secrets
- ⌘ Do not investigate
- ⌘ Under no circumstances should you attempt to deal with the problem alone

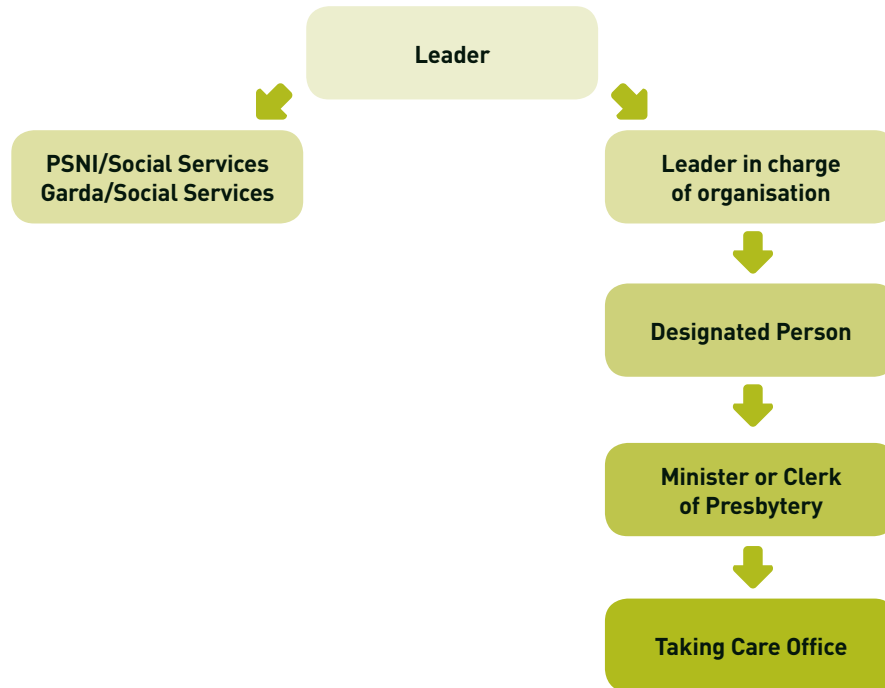
**Additional guidelines on dealing with allegations**

In June 2004 the General Assembly approved a booklet called, 'Policy and Procedures for Dealing with Complaints of Sexual Abuse'. This policy complements the Taking Care guidelines and provides additional information on the handling of complaints against ministers and others in positions of prominent church leadership. The policy gives more guidance to Kirk Sessions and Presbyteries on taking advice, referral to statutory authorities, pastoral care and suspensions arrangements.

A copy of the policy can be obtained from the Board of Social Witness office.

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### 3.2 THE REPORTING PROCESS



Flowchart explaining the reporting process:

1. If a child is in danger or a criminal offence has taken place, then PSNI/An Garda Síochána or Social Services must be informed immediately. Do not delay this by having a meeting. Remember that the task of deciding whether or not abuse has occurred rests with the professional agencies. If there is disagreement on whether or not to refer a concern to a child protection agency, any individual, as a concerned citizen, can still make a referral.
2. The person who has the concern should tell the leader in charge.
3. The leader-in-charge should inform the Designated Person or minister.
4. The Designated Person should meet with the minister as soon as possible, consider all the information available and decide to whom, if anyone, it needs to be reported. If for any reason it is not possible to speak to the minister or if an allegation concerns a minister or member of his/her family, the Designated Person should consult with the Clerk of Presbytery as soon as possible.
5. **All concerns, complaints and disclosures in a congregation relating to child protection must be reported to the Taking Care Office without delay as agreed by the General Assembly in 2008.** Appropriate advice and support will be given if requested.
6. Consideration should be given by the minister to offering support to the leader or other person who made the initial report. Help and advice can be provided by contacting the Taking Care Office.
7. In the congregational context, information should be restricted to the Designated Person, minister and Clerk of Session as appropriate.

### ::3.3 INDEPENDENT SAFEGUARDING AUTHORITY

It is a legal requirement that the Presbyterian Church in Ireland must inform the Independent Safeguarding Authority if they remove a person from volunteering or working in regulated activity with children or vulnerable adults in Northern Ireland.

According to the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007, a regulated activity provider, such as the Presbyterian Church, must refer to the ISA when they have withdrawn permission for a person to engage in regulated activity because they think that the person meets the following criteria:

- :: The person has received a caution/conviction for a relevant offence. This would be a serious offence that automatically bars a person from working with children or vulnerable adults. For example, the rape of a child.
- :: The person is suspected of being engaged in relevant conduct. Examples include conduct which endangers a child or vulnerable adult or is likely to endanger them and conduct of a sexual nature involving a child. This conduct could be acts of omission or commission.
- :: When the harm test is satisfied. The harm test is where it is thought that a person may harm a child or vulnerable adult, cause them to be harmed, or where a person has put a child/vulnerable adult at risk of harm, attempted to harm a child/vulnerable adult or incited another to harm a child/vulnerable adult. For example, a volunteer confided in a minister that he had a sexual interest in children but had never acted upon this interest.

Similar legislation will apply in the Republic of Ireland in due course.

More information can be found on the Independent Safeguarding Authority website:  
**[www.isa.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.isa.homeoffice.gov.uk)**



**Staff at the Taking Care Office will advise on this referral process and offer support to those involved. Referrals to the Independent Safeguarding Authority should only be made by staff at the Taking Care Office.**

### ::3.4 RECORDING

#### **Child's words**

It is very important that any words a child says are recorded accurately. If a child says something of concern to a leader, this should be recorded immediately on any piece of paper at hand and then the Report of Concern form written up at a later stage. Once completed, the Report of Concern form should be given to the Designated Person or minister and kept confidentially.



### Report of Concern form

The person who has reported the concern should complete a Report of Concern form which is available in Section 12.

Try to have available the following information:

- ⚡ The name and address of the child
- ⚡ Age of the child
- ⚡ The nature of any injury or complaint
- ⚡ The need for medical attention (if any)
- ⚡ What your concern actually is
- ⚡ What course of action you have already taken (if any)
- ⚡ Any other information you may have eg what school they attend, the name of their GP

### Record of Meeting form

A record should be kept of any meetings held in relation to a child protection concern. It should be recorded what the concern was and whether or not the decision was taken to report to an outside agency. The Record of Meeting form can be used as a prompt (see Section 12) and once completed should be kept confidentially in a safe place. Such records will be sought and examined if an investigation is carried out.

### ⚡3.5 MANAGING OFFENDERS

The Presbyterian Church believes that within the context of grace and forgiveness, attendance at worship services is open to everyone. At the same time,



**the protection of our children must remain paramount at all times.**

A person who has cautions or convictions on their record may still be involved in the life and witness of the Church. However if a person has convictions of abuse against children then they should never be in a position of leadership with children. If a congregation is following the Taking Care guidelines by having all new leaders in regulated positions undergo the vetting procedure then any convictions will be known through this process (for more information on vetting, see Section 5.2).

If it becomes known that a person who has been convicted of offences against children is attending church worship or any church organisations the Taking Care Office should be contacted. This is not to say they cannot attend but so that advice can be taken to ensure that attendance becomes safe for the protection of the children and others attending church and for the offender themselves. If an offender has restrictions placed upon them from PSNI/An Garda Síochána or Probation Services, the church must work in partnership with these agencies.

### **::3.6 DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS**

If a young person or parent/carer has a general complaint about the running of an organisation, such complaints should be directed through the organisation leader to the minister or the Kirk Session. The complainant should be assured that the matter will be dealt with in a prompt and appropriate manner. They should be informed as soon as possible of the decisions and the action, if any, that will be taken.

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### **::3.7 CONFIDENTIALITY**

#### **Who needs to know what?**

It is always important that child protection issues are treated confidentially, only those who need to know about an incident or concern should be informed.

This will mean that where the minister or Designated Person considers that a child is at risk of abuse, or that a criminal offence may have been committed, it should be reported to:

- :: the Taking Care Office
- :: Social Services or PSNI/An Garda Síochána

#### **Informing Parents**

Depending on what the incident or concern about a child is, parents/carers may need to be informed. In certain circumstances PSNI/An Garda Síochána or Social Services will advise; if they do not then contact the Taking Care Office for advice.

#### **Alleged Perpetrator**

If an allegation has been made against a leader, advice must be taken as to whether or not they should be informed.

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### **::3.8 REPORTING CONTACTS**

#### **Northern Ireland**

Any abuse issues relating to children in Northern Ireland should be dealt with either by the PSNI or Social Services.

#### **Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI)**

Within the PSNI, it is the Child Abuse Investigation Units (CAIU) that deals with issues relating to children. They are part of the overarching Public Protection Unit; there is one CAIU in each of the 8 policing districts. They are made up of male and female detectives who work in plain clothes and are specially trained to investigate all alleged and suspected cases of child abuse.

Contact the central number **0845 600 8000** or in the event of an emergency phone **999**.

**Health and Social Service Trusts**

All reports of a child protection nature in Northern Ireland are dealt with by either PSNI or by a local Gateway Team located within the Health & Social Service Trusts, who provide integrated health and social care services across Northern Ireland. Contact details for Social Services located within each Trust can be found on the Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland website [www.n-i.nhs.uk](http://www.n-i.nhs.uk).

**Republic of Ireland**

Any abuse issues relating to children in the Republic of Ireland should be dealt with either by An Garda Síochána or by social workers.

**An Garda Síochána**

If a child is believed to be at immediate risk, contact An Garda Síochána at the appropriate Garda station, in case of emergency ring **999** or **112**.

**Health Service Executive**

Any abuse issues relating to children in the Republic of Ireland should be dealt with by An Garda Síochána or social workers. There is a Duty Social Worker located within the HSE Child and Family Services Office. Offices are normally open 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Contact details for the 32 local health offices can be found on the HSE website [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie).

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004

Areas of Responsibility



TAKINGCARE  
Board of **Social** Witness

[www.pcibsw.org/takingcare](http://www.pcibsw.org/takingcare)

## 4. AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

### 4.1 THE ROLE OF KIRK SESSION



**Kirk Session is responsible for the protection of children within the congregation and its organisations.**

An exception to this would be independent organisations such as the Scout Association or local community groups using church premises (see Section 5.5).

#### **Appoint a Designated Person**

Every Kirk Session must appoint at least one Designated Person whose role is to co-ordinate the area of child protection within the congregation. Once appointed, it is important that the Designated Person is supported in his or her role. In order to carry out his or her responsibilities thoroughly the Designated Person will need help from other leaders and Kirk Session members. Some may need more help than others depending on the size of the congregation and the level of youth and children's activities (see Section 4.2).

#### **Oversee the appointment of leaders process**

It is the responsibility of Kirk Session to oversee the recruitment process for volunteers and paid youth/children's workers and to formally appoint them in their role. Once appointed, all leaders need to be supported and should feel appreciated (see Section 5).

#### **Adopt a child protection policy and review it regularly**

It is the responsibility of Kirk Session to formally adopt a child protection policy for their congregation and to carry out a review of the policy every three years. See Section 12 for a sample child protection policy and the child protection policy review factsheet that will help to identify areas that would need to be looked at during a review. The review should not be considered an inspection but more of a 'health check' to look at issues that have risen, how they have been dealt with and any further work which needs to be done. Contact the Taking Care Office for help and advice.

#### **Keep child protection on the agenda**

Kirk Session has the responsibility to appoint and oversee all new leaders so they need to be informed of each new appointment. It is Kirk Session's responsibility to be aware of child protection issues and concerns relevant to their congregation. That said, the whole of Kirk Session may not always be made aware of every incident or issue because of confidentiality reasons, and in some cases they may simply be informed that there was an incident and no other specifics will be given. In order to ensure that Kirk Session is kept up to date, child protection should be an item on each Kirk Session meeting agenda. Even if there is nothing to report, it should be recorded that this is the case.

#### 4.2 THE APPOINTMENT OF A DESIGNATED PERSON

The appointment of a Designated Person is very important and should be considered carefully. The people best suited for this task are those whose occupations, or lengthy voluntary experience, have brought them into contact with children. Those who have already participated in foundation training in child protection e.g. nurses, doctors, teachers, social workers or probation officers may be particularly suitable.

The Designated Person should NOT be the minister or Clerk of Session. It should **NOT** be someone who is employed by the congregation as a youth/children's worker or a person already heavily involved in youth/children's work within the congregation.

The Kirk Session may wish to appoint two people to the role, particularly if the congregation is dealing with large numbers of children, young people and volunteers. The Kirk Session may wish to appoint one male and one female. When a small congregation is unable to appoint a suitable person to the position of Designated Person, the assistance of a neighbouring church, or the Presbytery should be sought. One Designated Person can represent a joint charge.



**The Designated Person should complete the Registration for Designated Person form (available in Section 12) and send a copy to the Taking Care Office.**

#### 4.3 THE ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED PERSON

There are five main roles of the Designated Person:

1. The Designated Person must be consulted with if a child protection incident arises. If this were to occur the guidelines in Section 3 should be followed.
2. To organise Taking Care training for leaders within the congregation. The Designated Person does this by contacting the Taking Care Office who will provide a trainer.
3. To oversee the appointment process for new leaders including co-ordinating the distribution of applications forms and making sure that leaders are vetted where appropriate and reference request forms are sent. Members of Session, leaders in charge of organisations and administrative staff can help with this process.
4. To remain a point of contact with the Taking Care Office so that relevant information such as the Taking Care Update can be sent. Therefore it is important that the office is informed of any change in a Designated Person's contact details.
5. To report to Kirk Session on a regular basis about any child protection issues, this does not include specific details about a child protection incident (as this information may have to remain confidential) but for example, changes to the vetting system, information about a training session or concerns to do with leader compliance of the policy in one of the organisations.

Some congregations have widened the role of the Designated Person to include responsibilities such as interviewing new leaders. It is important not to expect too much of the Designated Person and to ensure that he or she is supported by Kirk Session in his or her role.

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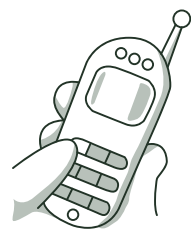
#### **::4.4 THE ROLE OF THE TAKING CARE OFFICE**

The Taking Care Office was established in 2006 with the appointment of a co-ordinator; an administrator followed soon after.

The main functions of the staff at the Taking Care Office are:

1. To offer support and advice on child protection issues to ministers, Designated Persons, elders, leaders and parents.
2. To provide child protection training for: volunteer leaders, Designated Persons, Youth and Children's Workers, ministers and other groups.
3. To regularly review and update child protection policies.
4. To keep up to date with changing legislation and inform those who need to know.
5. To facilitate the vetting of leaders where appropriate.
6. To work with PSNI/An Garda Síochána, Social Services and Probation Services on behalf of a congregation where necessary.

Staff regularly update the website with the most up to date information and news. Most forms and information are available to download. As well as this, resources can be ordered and bookings taken for conferences and training sessions through the website.



**Please contact staff at the Taking Care Office to discuss any issues or ask any questions to do with child protection. A 24-hour helpline number is available in case advice is required in relation to a child protection incident outside of office hours.**

#### **Taking Care Office Contact Details**

Phone: **(028) 9041 7290**  
Email: **takingcare@presbyterianireland.org**  
Out of Hours Helpline: **(028) 9041 7235**

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05

Recruitment &  
Appointment Process



TAKINGCARE  
Board of **Social** Witness

[www.pcibsw.org/takingcare](http://www.pcibsw.org/takingcare)



## 5. RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENT PROCESS

### ::5.1 THE RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENT PROCESS

It is necessary to have a recruitment and appointment policy in place to select leaders in order to provide a safe environment for children and young people. A proper appointment procedure is one of the most sensible and effective ways of assessing a person's suitability to work with children and young people, and may in itself act as a deterrent to potential abusers. This is often felt to be an unnecessary burden, particularly if the person is part-time, a volunteer or already known to the minister or members of the congregation. However, the more routine the procedure becomes, the less intimidating it will be to all concerned. By having good standards of practice in our organisations, people are more likely to want to join. Increasingly parents want evidence of good recruitment.

Care needs to be taken to ensure that anyone who may be unsuitable for working with young people is not given the opportunity to become a leader.



**It is important to ensure that everyone participates in a selection procedure, even if they are recognised as people of good standing.**

#### The Appointment of Leaders Process

**Application Form:** An application form must be completed by everyone applying to work with children and young people in regulated positions. The application form includes the vetting process according to legislation and good practice. Applicants will be asked to declare any past criminal convictions.



**Interview:** The organisational leader, along with either the minister, Designated Person or an elder, should meet the person and ensure that they have the ability and commitment required for the role. At the interview the child protection policy should be provided and explained and the leader should be given a copy of the pocket-sized leader's guide, 'We Care 4 U Too!'

**Referees:** The names of two referees should be given by the applicant. The referees should **NOT** be family members, the minister, Designated Person or either of the interviewers. If the applicant is coming from a previous place of worship then a reference should be sought from their previous minister. Otherwise, references should be from people who have had first-hand knowledge of their work with children/young people and have known the applicant for at least two years. It is usually the role of the Designated Person to send a reference request form (see Section 12) to the referees given. These do not need to be sent to the Taking Care Office with the application form but should be kept for the congregation's own records.

**Kirk Session approval:** All application forms must be signed by either the minister or a member of Kirk Session to say that as far as the elders are aware, the applicant is suitable for the role for which they are applying.

**Form to be sent to Taking Care Office:** All application forms must be sent to the Taking Care Office. It is at this stage that appropriate vetting will take place in line with current legislation and practice. The Designated Person, whose role it is to distribute forms and collect them before returning them to the Taking Care Office, must check the forms carefully to make sure they have been completed thoroughly.

**Letter of appointment to Designated Person:** Once the vetting process is complete, a letter will be sent from the Taking Care Office to the Designated Person of the congregation to notify them of the outcome. The applicant can now be appointed. In Northern Ireland the applicant will also receive a certificate directly from Access NI.

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## **::5.2 VETTING**

### **General vetting principles**

In order to comply with the law and good practice, all leaders taking up a regulated position to work with children and young people must be vetted. The process of vetting leaders involves a criminal records check which will show if an applicant has any criminal convictions.

The vetting process does take time and because of this, congregations are urged to recruit their leaders well in advance and allow for this time when planning events such as a Holiday Bible Club. Contact the Taking Care Office to find out how long the process is currently taking.

Please remember that vetting is only a part of the appointment process. Just because a person does not have a criminal record, does not mean that they are suitable to work with children. It simply means they have no criminal record.

A person who does have a criminal conviction will not necessarily be barred from working with children and young people within a church setting. Only convictions considered relevant will be taken into consideration when an appointment is made.

Please be assured that all certificates, forms and conviction information are treated sensitively and confidentially at the Taking Care Office.

### **Northern Ireland**

New leaders (since April 2005) who are working in a regulated position with children and young people should complete the most recent application form for leaders which includes an Access Northern Ireland form.

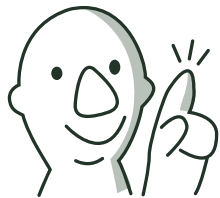
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Leaders on a rota basis for organisations such as crèche or children's church for example, should only complete the application form if they meet the frequency test, ie four or more times a year. The leader in charge of each organisation eg Sunday School Superintendent, should also be vetted.

### Republic of Ireland

New leaders (since September 2006) who are working in a regulated position with children and young people should complete an application form for leaders which includes a Garda vetting form.

Leaders on a rota basis for organisations such as crèche or children's church for example, should only complete the application form if they meet the frequency test, ie four or more times a year. The leader in charge of each organisation eg Sunday School Superintendent, should also be vetted.



**Please check the Taking Care website or contact the office for the most up to date information.**

### Regulated Position

At the time of writing a regulated position is defined as:

An adult (ie a person 18 years old and over) working either as a volunteer or in a paid position, four or more times a year, in direct contact with children (ie a person under 18 years old).

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## ::5.3 TRAINING

### The importance of training

As well as being appointed properly, it is important that leaders have adequate training to do the job required of them. It is the responsibility of Kirk Session not only to appoint leaders but to support them in their role; this includes providing appropriate opportunities for training.

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland offers a variety of training resources through both the Boards of Christian Training and Youth and Children's Ministry as well as the Taking Care programme. The Board of Christian Training is responsible for the development of training courses and resources for church members. The Board of Youth and Children's ministry provides training in a variety of formats that equips youth and children's workers for leadership within the local church. Other Boards offer specific training, for example the Board of Mission Overseas offers training for those who are going on a short-term team overseas with their congregation. Child protection training is essential to all people who work with children and young people in all fields of life, within a professional and voluntary basis. Within the Presbyterian Church, the child protection training delivered at a congregational level is called 'Taking Care' training.



**It is essential that leaders and helpers within the Presbyterian Church attend Taking Care training facilitated by a Taking Care trainer as this training is specific to the Church's own policy.**

Trainers are kept up to date continually with changes to policy, law and practice as well as resources available and upcoming events.

### **Taking Care training**

Leaders and helpers who work with children and young people should attend Taking Care training on a regular basis (as church policy or legislation demands). This includes young leaders/helpers (for definition, see Section 1.3), as well as leaders on a rota basis for organisations such as crèche and children's church. Even though they may not be working with children regularly, they should still attend training. Even those who have a good knowledge of child protection issues in another field should attend as Taking Care training is the only training available that is specific to the policy of the Presbyterian Church.

Taking Care training is available in two different levels – foundation and refresher training. Foundation training is for first time leaders who have not attended Taking Care training. Refresher training is for leaders who have attended foundation training and therefore have a working knowledge of the Church's policy.

It is recommended that the congregation keep a record of all training that has been undertaken and who has attended. The Designated Person should organise training for the leaders in their congregation by contacting the Taking Care Office. To find out where training is happening in your area check the website.

### **Training for Designated Persons**

Once a new Designated Person has been appointed they should attend a training session specifically for Designated Persons. Please contact the Taking Care Office to find out about this training.

### **Training for employed youth/children's workers**

Once appointed, an employed youth/children's worker should also attend Taking Care training for youth/children's workers at the first available opportunity. This training looks in depth at issues which arise when working closely with children and young people.

### **Training for ministers**

Child protection training for ministers as agreed by the 2007 General Assembly is organised through the Taking Care Office on a regular basis (as church policy or legislation demands). Ministers and Presbytery Clerks will be contacted directly about these events.

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#### ::5.4 REGISTER OF ALL LEADERS

A register of all leaders working with children within a congregation should be kept and reviewed on an annual basis. This register should be a record of all leaders and helpers in all organisations under the auspices of Kirk Session, whether they have completed an application form or not, are on a rota basis, or are under the age of 18. A register of all leaders is available in Section 12, as well as an annual update form which should be used to update the register.

#### ::5.5 COMMON PROTOCOL

The Common Protocol is an agreed procedure for churches relating to independent organisations working with children and young people, regularly using church premises. The Protocol has been agreed by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Church of Ireland, Methodist Church in Ireland and Boys' Brigade (NI), Girls' Brigade (NI), the Scouting Association and Girl Guiding Ulster. It also has application with any other Christian, sporting, arts or leisure groups using church premises. The protocol can be found in Section 12 or downloaded from the website where an information leaflet is also available.

General principles are set out below:

##### What does it do?

The Common Protocol clearly sets out the expectations and responsibilities of both the churches and the independent organisations, particularly in the areas of child protection, appointment of leaders, information sharing, and reporting of concerns of a child protection nature which may arise within an organisation.

##### Who should use it?

- :: Congregations whose premises are used by independent organisations (ie not under the auspices of Kirk Session).
- :: All independent organisations working with children and young people, and regularly using church premises.

##### What is an independent organisation?

The nature of the independence of children's and youth organisations varies. In Northern Ireland, Boys' Brigade (NI) and Girls' Brigade (NI) are integral to the congregations where they exist; the Scouting Association and Girl Guiding Ulster are national young people's organisations and are fully independent. Sporting, arts or leisure groups may be affiliated to national networks or may be smaller stand-alone organisations. The Common Protocol has application for churches and organisations in all of these settings.

##### What the church is responsible for:

1. Recruiting, selecting and appointing (including vetting) all church based children's/youth leaders **including leaders for BB (NI) and GB (NI).**<sup>5</sup>
2. Providing child protection training to all church based children's and youth leaders **and leaders for BB (NI) and GB (NI).**

<sup>5</sup>BB (NI) and GB (NI) are organisations operated by the local church but also have separate external headquarters. Leaders are nominated, approved and appointed by the local church hence for these organisations points 3 and 4 above do not apply.

3. Supplying to the leader of the fully independent organisation the names and contact details of the church personnel who are responsible for the premises and the Designated Person for child protection in the congregation.
4. Ensuring that the Clerk of Session signs annually, on behalf of the church, the Common Protocol with each fully independent organisation using church premises.
5. Ensuring the safety of the premises.

**BB(NI) and GB(NI)** companies should satisfy themselves of the extent of insurance cover provided for their activities within their organisation's annual capitation.

#### **What a fully independent organisation is responsible for:**

1. Recruiting, selecting and appointing (including vetting) leaders/ workers in their organisations.
2. Providing child protection training to the leaders/workers of their organisation.
3. Providing annually to the congregation the names and contact details of all leaders following appointment and confirming that all new appointees have been subject to vetting.
4. Reporting to the statutory agencies any concerns of a child protection nature that have arisen within the independent organisation.
5. Provide written confirmation to the church that adequate insurance cover is in place for its activities.
6. Ensuring that the leader in charge signs annually on behalf of the organisation, the Common Protocol with the congregation providing premises for the organisation's meetings.

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#### **::5.6 EMPLOYMENT OF PAID WORKERS**

When a congregation is employing someone to work with children, young people or adults they must follow the appointment process as usual (5.1). As well as this, they must follow the guidance set out in the Peninsula manual, in the section, "Guide to Recruiting Local Church Employees". This manual has been issued to all congregations on behalf of the Presbyterian Church by Peninsula Business Services Limited who provide an employment advice service. Congregations should also have regard to the guidance included in "A Guide to Health and Safety for your Local Church" also issued by Peninsula. Contact details for Peninsula can be found in Section 12 and are included in both manuals.

Other issues that need to be considered are set out below:

#### **Probationary Period**

For paid posts, appointment should be conditional on the successful completion of a probationary period which is usually six months.

**Annual Appraisal**

In line with Union Commission guidelines, the employee should have an annual appraisal of the post using a structured scheme that allows both the employee and employer to review progress in different areas of the job. An appraisal form should be completed by both the employee and the employer.

**Salary**

In line with Union Commission guidelines, consideration should be given to awarding an annual salary increment each year. If after the appraisal process is complete, it is agreed that the employee has reached the objective and measurable outcomes set the previous year. Any series of incremental rises should only be up to the maximum point on the salary scale set within the contract of employment.

**Child Protection Training**

Once appointed the employee should be given a copy of the congregation's child protection policy and attend Taking Care training if they have not already done so within the last year. If the role will involve substantial work with children and/or young people, the employee should also attend Taking Care training for youth/children's workers at the first available opportunity.

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## 6. WORKING TOGETHER

### ::6.1 RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL LEADERS

To ensure that the organisation responds in a correct and prompt manner to concerns, accidents and incidents within an organisation, all leaders need to check that:

- :: There are accident/incident report forms on the premises.
- :: The leader in charge has immediate access to names, addresses and phone numbers of the children/young people attending.
- :: There is access to a phone in the event of an emergency.
- :: All leaders are aware of the reporting procedure in the event of a concern or accident/incident (the Report of Concern form is available in Section 12).
- :: All leaders should know the name and phone number of the Designated Person(s).
- :: All leaders should have a good understanding of the need to keep personal details of young people and other leaders confidential.
- :: Leaders should be sensitive and where appropriate, exercise confidentiality to the backgrounds, medical history and family circumstances of all children.

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### ::6.2 TEAM WORK

- 1. Each leader and helper must be fully acquainted with the child protection policy and reporting process.**
2. Each organisation should draw up clearly defined aims and objectives for its overall running and review this on an annual basis.
3. Each leader and helper should be acquainted with, and be in full support of, the code of conduct for the organisation.
4. Within each organisation, a clearly defined line of accountability should be in place, whereby all leaders and helpers report to the appointed leader in charge. The leader in charge reports to the Kirk Session with which ultimate responsibility lies.
5. At any given meeting, leaders and helpers should be informed of the specific programme, and be clear about one another's responsibilities.
6. Acquaint the team (especially new leaders and helpers) with useful advice on getting to know children ie trying to get to know the names of the children as quickly as possible; talking to the children about themselves, what they like, what they do during the rest of the week; talking to the children about yourself.
7. At the conclusion of the session/evening ie weekly meeting or at the end of June, there should be an evaluation of the programme, when leaders and helpers can share information about issues and any difficulties that may have arisen.

## **::6.3 WORKING WITH PARENTS/CARERS**

### **The responsibility of parents/carers**

Parents/carers are primarily responsible for their children. They have a responsibility to return consent forms promptly within the agreed deadlines, to inform organisational leaders of any changes to their child's medication or circumstances and also encourage their child to abide by the rules of the organisation. Use the 'We Care With U' leaflet to remind parents/carers of their responsibilities.

### **Parental consent forms**

A parental consent form should be completed when a child enrolls in an organisation (a sample multi-purpose consent form can be found in Section 12). If using a multi-purpose consent form, copies should be circulated to all the organisations attended by the individual child.

It is not always necessary for consent forms to be issued annually. For example, if a youth organisation generally has the same children every year and consent forms have been completed when the child started the organisation, the organisation can take the decision to issue consent forms every other year. In the years that a consent form is not sent out, parents should be asked to inform the organisation of any changes in contact details, family circumstances or medical information that the leaders need to be made aware of.

If a day trip, special activity or residential is organised, a specific consent form covering this should be completed. It is important to have a parent/carer signature and information regarding medication and allergies etc. (a sample form can be found in Section 12).

The information on consent forms and sign-in sheets should be kept confidential to the leaders of the organisation. The forms should be kept in a secure location on church premises eg a locked filing cabinet, but should be accessible when the group meets. If the group is on an outing or residential, the leader should ensure that he or she has the information contained on consent forms with him or her.

### **Sign-in sheet**

For the purposes of a one-off event or drop in activity eg outreach night or youth club, a sign-in sheet may be used instead of parental consent forms. This can only be used for children aged eleven plus and only in situations where it isn't deemed possible to obtain parental consent forms. It is important that young people sign out as well as sign in so that leaders are aware of how many people are in the building at any one time. It is also important that young people are asked to give a contact number and medical information in case of an emergency. An example of a sign-in sheet can be found in Section 12.

### Incidents and Concerns

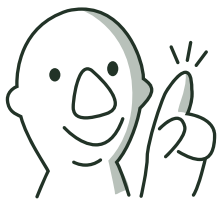
Depending on what the incident or concern about a child is parents/carers may need to be informed. In certain circumstances PSNI/An Garda Síochána or Social Services will advise; if they do not then contact the Taking Care Office for advice.

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## ::6.4 DISCIPLINE

### Code of Conduct

In every aspect of life, organisations function best where there are clear guidelines and structures.



**It is important that all leaders know what the boundaries and rules of an organisation are and that these are explained to children and parents.**

The best way of doing this is by having a code of conduct for children and young people when attending organisations, drawn up at the commencement of the year's activities. A code of conduct will help to create a safe, secure environment and an atmosphere where children will feel that they can relate to the leaders and helpers.

In some organisations it is the young people themselves who draw up the code of conduct with the help of the leaders. It can be easier to enforce the boundaries if the young people play a part in deciding what these should be, however it is not always appropriate and in some organisations it may be more suitable that the leaders decide on the boundaries and acceptable behaviour. Parents should be informed of the code of conduct once it is agreed upon (a sample code of conduct factsheet is available in Section 12).

**Discipline Guidelines**

If a young person breaks the code of conduct or agreed rules then sanctions need to be put in place and carried out to ensure a safe environment for all. When disciplining children of all ages the following guidelines need to be adhered to:

**Never**

- Use force (smack, hit)
- Discipline out of anger (but out of love)
- Use a 'put-down' with children/young people
- Humiliate a child or young person
- Reject the child, just the behaviour
- Allow some children to take all your time and energy
- Compare children with each other

**Always**

- Ask God for wisdom, discernment and understanding
  - Pray for and with the children
  - Work on each individual child's positive characteristics
  - Be a good role model and set a good example
  - Take care to give quieter and well-behaved children attention
  - Be consistent and work together as a team
  - Ensure other leaders know what you have said – this avoids manipulation
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# 07

## Good Standards of Practice

## 7. GOOD STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

### ::7.1 PHYSICAL CONTACT

Physical contact with children should be child initiated and appropriate to the age and gender of the child. If a child is in distress it may be perfectly acceptable (and sometimes necessary) to offer comfort and reassurance by placing a hand on their shoulder or taking their hand. This is a valid way of expressing concern and care for children and most children will feel comfortable with it. Making staff and volunteers frightened of any physical contact with children is not an effective way of reducing abuse.



**Leaders should avoid being on their own with a child; if a child wishes to talk confidentially with them they should remain visible to other adults.**

Leaders must avoid physical contact which may be misconstrued by a young person or other observer.

#### **Leaders should never:**

- :: Spend an excessive amount of time alone with children away from others
- :: Take children to your home without the child's parents and the leader of the organisation or other responsible person knowing
- :: Allow or engage in inappropriate touching in any form
- :: Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- :: Make sexually suggestive comments about, or to, a child, even in fun
- :: Let allegations made by a child go unchallenged or unrecorded
- :: Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves
- :: Engage in rough or inappropriate behaviour
- :: Rely solely on their reputation to protect themselves

It may sometimes be necessary for leaders to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are very young or have disabilities. In such situations leaders need to be sensitive to the child and undertake personal care with the utmost discretion (see Section 7.7 for more information on working with children who have special needs, and Section 12 for a personal care form and a personal care log).

#### **Using Restraint**

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. The priority at all times must be to protect all children from harm.

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, not punishment. Following an incident when restraint has been used, a report should be inserted in an accident/incident report form and parents/carers should be notified.

## **::7.2 RECOMMENDED RATIOS**

All organisations must abide by the recommended ratios of children/young people to leaders. In determining the ratios of staff to children organisation leaders should bear in mind that there should be a minimum of at least 2 leaders/helpers present at all times.

### **Young leaders/helpers**

Young leaders (aged between 15 and 18) should not be left alone in a supervisory capacity with children. They may, however, be counted in the ratios as long as other adult leaders are present and in charge.

### **Ratios for indoor activities**

#### **Under 8 years**

0 to 2 years = 1 leader to 3 children

2 to 3 years = 1 leader to 4 children

3 to 7 years = 1 leader to 8 children

#### **8 years and over**

8 years and over = 1 leader to 10 children/young people.

There should be a gender mix of leaders with a mixed gender group of children or young people.

### **Ratios for outdoor activities**

#### **Under 8 years**

0 to 2 years = 1 leader to 3 children

2 to 3 years = 1 leader to 4 children

3 to 7 years = 1 leader to 6 children

#### **8 to 13 years**

The recommended ratios for children after 8 to 13 years and over are 2 leaders to 15 children. One additional leader for every 8 extra children, or part thereof.

#### **13 years and over**

The recommended ratios for young people aged 13 and over are 2 leaders to 20 children (preferably one of each gender). One additional leader for every 10 young people, or part thereof.

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### ::7.3 TRANSPORT

Youth work may involve transporting young people at some stage.



**Whether this is by car, coach or minibus and whether it is to and from the church building or an organised outing or residential, safety must be considered a priority at all times.**

#### Drivers

When planning an outing, leaders of organisations must exercise discretion as to who the drivers of the vehicles will be. A driver transporting other people's children must be aware of his/her responsibility towards the passengers and drive carefully within the national speed limit. A driver should know what to do in the event of a breakdown or accident and must ensure that they have adequate and up to date insurance cover. Greater consideration should be given to using 'R' (NI) drivers and recently qualified drivers (RoI) as nominated drivers on an outing or residential due to their lack of driving experience.

In addition leaders should observe the guidelines below which will help ensure protection for both them and the young people.

#### Minibus drivers

##### Northern Ireland

Drivers who obtained their full car driving licence before 1 January 1997 may drive a minibus in the UK (until their licence expires) if they hold a valid full driving licence for private cars and if the vehicle is not being used for hire or reward.

Drivers who obtained their full car driving licence on or after 1 January 1997 are only licenced to drive a vehicle with up to eight seats (in addition to the driver). To drive a minibus, such drivers need to gain category D1 PCV entitlement on their licence by meeting higher medical standards and passing an appropriate test.

However, a volunteer driver is allowed to drive a minibus with up to 16 passenger seats (in addition to the driver) for social purposes by a non-commercial body, provided that the driver has held a full B licence for at least two years, is 21 years old or over and under 70 years old (unless s/he has passed PCV medical and gained restriction 120) and the vehicle meets the weight restriction.

##### Republic of Ireland

In the Republic of Ireland, a person driving a minibus must have a full category D driving licence for which they must sit a theory and practical test.

#### Private Cars

Leaders should avoid transporting a child or young person on their own. It is good practice to have another leader or other children in the car. However, if a situation does occur when a leader has to transport a child alone, they should



ensure that other leaders know this is happening and that the child is in the back seat. If possible, parents should be made aware that their child will be in the car on their own with a leader, affording them the opportunity to make alternative arrangements.

Drivers should declare in writing to their insurers that they carry children in their vehicles, and keep a copy of relevant paperwork with their insurance documents.

### **Seatbelts and child restraints**

Organisations or individuals who carry other people's children in cars must make sure they use child restraints for each child carried, or adult seatbelts appropriately. Child restraints are rearward-facing baby seats, forward-facing child seats, booster seats and booster cushions. Seatbelts must be worn for any journey, no matter how short. In Northern Ireland it is legally the driver's responsibility to ensure that seatbelts are worn for all passengers under the age of 14 and in the Republic of Ireland it is the driver's responsibility that seatbelts are worn for all passengers under 17 years old.

Booster seats must be used when travelling by car in line with relevant legislation:

### **Northern Ireland**

Children under 12 years old or less than 4' 5"/135cm in height must use a booster seat.

The exceptions according to the law are:

- ∴ When travelling by a taxi
- ∴ When there are already two booster seats in the back and no room for a third
- ∴ Where there is an 'unforeseen circumstance' eg giving a child a lift home when their parents have not turned up.

### **Republic of Ireland**

Children under 5'/150 cm in height and weighing less than 36 kilograms (generally children up to 11 or 12 years old) must use the correct child seat or booster cushion. The only exception to using a child seat, booster seat or booster cushion is if a child is travelling in a taxi.

### **Minibuses, buses and coaches**

If driving the congregation's minibus(es), drivers must be named on the congregation's insurance policy. Accident/incident report forms and a breakdown logbook should be carried in church minibuses and kept up to date. A first aid kit and fire extinguisher should also be on board and drivers should be familiar with their use.

The law states that it is the driver's responsibility to make sure that each vehicle is in a road-worthy condition before use. Failure to do so may result in the driver being legally liable in the event of any accident. Therefore, each driver must carry out a range of checks to ensure the road-worthiness of the vehicle. If in doubt, the vehicle should not be driven.

In minibuses, children over 3 years old must wear seatbelts or use child restraints if available. In the Republic of Ireland road traffic regulations require the fitting of seatbelts in all forward facing seats in minibuses.

On larger buses and coaches all seated passengers aged 14 years and above must wear seatbelts if they are fitted. The driver must notify passengers when they board that they have to wear their seatbelts and/or signs must be displayed at every seat.

When booking a minibus, bus or coach, make sure it has seatbelts and ask whether child restraints can be provided or whether you can use your own. But be aware that it may not be possible to fit them properly because the seats and seatbelts are different from cars.

### **Supervision while travelling**

Leaders who accompany young people in minibuses/coaches/boats/trains etc should, where possible, sit among the young people and be dispersed in the vehicle. For example, there should be at least one adult travelling in the back of a minibus and preferably near the exit points of the vehicle. Their group members must be in the sight of a leader at all times.

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## **::7.4 RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMMES AND OUTINGS**

Churches and organisations can offer a wide range of activities outside church premises. These may include day trips to the seaside, forest parks, theme parks, visits to the cinema, theatre, museums and shopping trips. As well as this, residential programmes often become the highlight of any congregation's youth programme, offering more opportunity to enhance friendships within the group. While recognising the tremendous impact these trips can have on a young person's emotional, physical and spiritual development, the leader in charge ought to note the following:

### **The Residential Centre**

Check your location and accommodation. Ensure that it is adequate for your groups and activity. The centre must have adequate insurance cover for your group and the activities it hopes to engage in. Insurance should in particular cover high-risk activities eg canoeing, rock climbing etc. The centre should inform you of its rules and regulations. Make every effort to be aware of its timetable eg whether it has a lights-out time, meal times, what time it expects the group to arrive and to depart. The centre should provide access to first aid/GP in the event of an emergency. The centre should also provide separate sleeping accommodation for males/females.

### **Parental Consent**

Parents'/carers' consent must be obtained when taking any young person away for a residential or outing. The consent form for special outings /activities /residential programmes should be used (see Section 12).

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Before taking a group away, ensure that parents/carers are aware of the following:

- ⚡ The programme/activities their child is encouraged/expected to participate in, especially high-risk activities eg bouldering, canoeing etc.
- ⚡ Whether there will be shopping trips or other free time in town areas and, if so, the level of supervision during such trips.
- ⚡ The names of leaders/helpers accompanying the group and a contact number (Where possible it is advisable to arrange a pre-residential briefing for the parents, giving information and allowing parents an opportunity to meet the leaders/helpers).
- ⚡ The centre telephone number and address.
- ⚡ The group's 'contract' ie what rules the young people will be asked to abide by, and possible consequences if these are broken.
- ⚡ What clothes and other items the young people might be expected to need.
- ⚡ How much pocket money might be sufficient (it is advisable to set a limit on this).
- ⚡ That the names and contact details of all young people and leaders attending a residential/camp etc will be left with a nominated person in the congregation.

### Young people

Young people must have parental/carer consent to participate in the residential programme and its named activities. They should be fully informed of the nature of the residential programme, ie what is expected of them. They should never be coerced or forced into any activity with which they are uncomfortable. They should be involved in the drawing up of rules and a contract for behaviour and be made aware of sanctions should they fail to comply.

### Risk assessment

Risk assessment will help leaders when planning events, to consider the hazards and risks that the group will come across during the time that the children are in their care.



**A risk assessment form should be completed for each outing, residential or community/outreach event eg church auction or Sunday School picnic**

(for more information on risk assessment, see Section 9.2).

### Checklist

- ⚡ What is the best time to go – time of year, time of week?
- ⚡ How will you get there?
- ⚡ How much will it cost?
- ⚡ Have you completed a risk assessment form? (see risk assessment form in Section 12)
- ⚡ Is the place you are visiting suitable for the age range you are taking?
- ⚡ Is the proposed outing age appropriate, eg is the film, or the theatre show suitable?
- ⚡ Can the venue cater for any children who have special needs?
- ⚡ What food will be provided and will this be appropriate for children who have allergies?

- ⚡ Are there enough leaders?
- ⚡ Is there a good gender mix of leaders (if appropriate)?
- ⚡ Does the outing warrant additional insurance?
- ⚡ Has consent been given by parents/carers? (see special consent form in Section 12)
- ⚡ Has consideration been given to places to stop for refreshments/toilets?
- ⚡ Is there an alternative plan if the venue is weather dependent?

Remember to inform a nominated person from the congregation of your exact location, contact mobile phone number and home contact numbers in case of emergency for all children, young people and leaders (see residential/outing form in Section 12).

When the outing or residential is over, leaders should carry out a review and ask what went really well and what could be improved on.

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### ⚡7.5 CHURCH SLEEPOVERS

Youth groups are increasingly using church halls as overnight accommodation.



**Before such a venture is considered, organisers should think through security and safety issues.** A risk assessment form is recommended (see Section 9.2).

The following checklist should be used to ensure the accommodation is suitable:

- ⚡ Parental consent must be sought.
- ⚡ Only ground floor accommodation is considered suitable for sleeping.
- ⚡ There should be appropriate male/female segregation and supervision (for ratios see Section 7.2).
- ⚡ Sleeping accommodation for leaders/helpers and young people, where possible, should be separate, but the young people's accommodation ought to be easily accessible.
- ⚡ Leaders/helpers must always avoid staying on their own with a young person. There must always be other leaders/helpers or young people present.
- ⚡ There should be at least one nominated first aider and a complete first aid box.
- ⚡ The accommodation should be suitable for any child attending who has special needs.
- ⚡ There should be adequate mobile phone reception or a landline.
- ⚡ There should be at least two separate routes leading from the sleeping accommodation and out of the building.
- ⚡ Fire extinguishers should be positioned in appropriate and accessible locations.
- ⚡ Doors should be checked for ease of opening in an emergency.
- ⚡ Exits should be clearly marked and unblocked.
- ⚡ Clear instructions in the event of an evacuation should be given to both young people and leaders/helpers.

- ∴ Portable heating appliances should not impede exits and should be turned off during sleeping hours.
- ∴ Leaders/helpers should have torches in case of power failure.
- ∴ There should be a no smoking, no alcohol, drug free rule applied to the premises.
- ∴ A record of sleeping arrangements should be kept detailing the names of children and leaders who stayed over and where they slept.

Once these issues have been considered organisers should only proceed if they are confident that the facilities are adequate to meet the needs of the group.

## ∴7.6 PHOTOGRAPHS

Since the introduction of the Data Protection Act in 1998, churches must be very careful if they use photographs, videos and webcams of clearly identifiable people.

The following guidelines should be adhered to:

- ∴ Permission (verbal or written) should be obtained of all the people (children and adults) who will appear in a photograph, video or webcam image before the photograph is taken or footage recorded.
- ∴ It should be made clear why that person's image is being used, what use you will make of it, and who might want to look at the pictures.
- ∴ Children and young people should not be identified by name or other personal details. These details include email, phone or postal addresses.
- ∴ When using photographs of children and young people, it is preferable to use group pictures.
- ∴ Carefully consider location and pose.
- ∴ Do not insist that a child participates.



**∴ Obtain a written and specific consent from parents or carers before using photographs on a website.**

Please note that the sample consent form contains a parental consent for use of images of children for general church purposes.

### **Young people taking photographs of each other**

Leaders should encourage young people to be sensible when taking photos or videoing each other, especially if they are to be posted on the internet. Young people should be encouraged to let their friends know if their intention is to post photographs online, giving them the opportunity to object. Young people may need to be reminded that once photographs are on the internet they have no control over where they end up. Organisation leaders may want to include this issue in their code of conduct.

## **::7.7 WORKING WITH CHILDREN WHO HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS**

The church should be a place where all children and their families are welcome.



**Organisations within the church have a duty to be inclusive and to provide opportunities for children and young people of all abilities and regardless of any medical conditions or disabilities.**

### **Be informed!**

Talk with the parents or carers to find out what a child's specific needs are and how they are normally met at home or at school. Assume nothing and don't be afraid to ask! Some children with special needs may require one-to-one help in a group or organisation; perhaps an extra leader will be needed for this responsibility.

For extra information and advice about working with children who have particular special needs and conditions contact the Taking Care Office. You will find a useful list of websites in Section 12.

### **Personal care**

Children and young people who have a disability can be at greater risk of abuse. They will often require more help with personal care, such as washing, dressing, toileting, feeding, mobility etc, or may have limited understanding and behave in a non-age appropriate way.

If a child needs help with toileting or more intimate care it is important to make sure their dignity is preserved. It is good practice that the same leader as far as possible and the same gender as the child is involved in helping them.

A personal care plan can be drawn up by parents/carers to advise leaders on how to best meet the needs of the child (see Section 12 for an example). Leaders can complete a personal care log (see Section 12 for an example) to record how the needs of the child were met each time they attend the organisation.

### **Be inclusive!**

As far as possible, try to make sure that all children can participate in the activities that you have organised. Try not to rely on one particular method of teaching. For example, a word search is not a suitable activity for a child who is dyslexic; other children may struggle with running or ball games due to poor mobility skills. Biblical teaching can be used to show that we are all different and yet we are all special to God.

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Technology



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## 8. TECHNOLOGY

In an increasingly complex world the opportunities for child abuse are growing. Those who care for children need to be aware of the opportunities for abuse through the misuse of the internet, text messaging, video and other media. While good use of such media can be beneficial we must be vigilant and alert to the possibilities of misuse and the consequent harm to young people that can result.

### ::8.1 USING COMPUTERS

If there is a computer being used within the programme of your organisation, it is important that guidelines are drawn up in order to ensure that it is used for its correct purpose and that it is looked after properly. The leaders could agree on a contract which would be given to and possibly signed by all children, parents and leaders.

Leaders need to be agreed upon the primary purpose of using computers as part of their programme. For example, is it primarily used for the purposes of research in a homework club or recreational games as part of the youth club? Leaders need to agree which websites are suitable and which websites are unsuitable for the age group of children that they are working with. Computers need to be secure with up to date virus checkers and appropriate parental controls. When young people are using computers on church premises they should be well supervised (see Section 12 for a sample computer contract for use within a church organisation).

### ::8.2 CHILDREN AND THE INTERNET

Whilst the development of the internet has revolutionised communication systems throughout the world and appropriately used is an excellent resource, care in its application needs to be exercised so that the safety of a child is not compromised.



**Children need to be aware of online safety in the same way they are taught road safety.**

As well as the prevalence of online grooming, children can often be the victims of cyber bullying. Bullying through the use of social media can be more intense and more difficult to escape than bullying children experience within the playground or school.

The Taking Care Office has worked in partnership with CEOP (Child Exploitation Online Protection) to educate parents, leaders and children about the safety issues regarding the internet. Several youth leaders have been trained to deliver their 'Thinkuknow' education programme to children and young people in youth groups. To organise training for the young people or parents in your congregation please contact the Taking Care Office. Contact details of CEOP and other organisations working in this area can be found in Section 12.



### **::8.3 CHURCH WEBSITES**

When designing or developing a church or youth website or an internet page please remember the following:

- :: Parental permission must be obtained before using any pictures of a child/group of children on a website.
- :: Avoid using photographs of individual children which can be easily copied on to other websites, it is preferable to use a group photograph.
- :: Names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses should not be given.
- :: Leaders should be aware that by advertising dates and times of events online, there is the possibility that other people, who would not have otherwise heard of an event, may target the event and turn up without warning.
- :: It should be made very clear to young people that the website should not be used to make arrangements to meet up with each other casually, eg going out for coffee. They need to be reminded that they don't know who is reading their conversation.
- :: A 'closed' page or password protected site can help to limit who can view the site.

### **::8.4 COMMUNICATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE VIA THE INTERNET**

Working with young people often requires a balancing act between being part of the world in which they live, in order to reach them, and yet maintaining a leadership role. In order to understand young people, it is important to live in their culture and at the same time be a role model to them. No place is this balancing act more difficult to get right than in the area of technology, namely the internet and, in particular, social networking sites, blogs, micro-blogs and other public domain publishing methods.

If used well, methods of communication via the internet can be effective tools in youth ministry. For example, social networking sites have a group facility which allows online groups to meet in a virtual space where all information and comments are seen by everyone in that group but no-one else.

It is worth noting that everything posted on the internet – comments, opinions and photos – can potentially be seen and copied by anyone else using the internet. Social networking sites have privacy settings for this reason and these limit what any other person, whom you have not accepted as a friend, can view.

Leaders should think carefully before adding a child or young person in the organisation in which they are leaders, as a friend or follower on a social networking site. If a leader does choose to accept a child or young person as a friend or follower, it is important always to remember that the child or young person has access to all comments, opinions, information and photos which are posted on the leader's profile, either by the leader or by their other friends. Leaders are recommended to evaluate photos of themselves that are posted on these sites and consider deleting or 'untagging' any photos in which they are depicted in what could possibly be construed as compromising situations, thus preventing the photograph or other material being used inappropriately.

Leaders should not post photographs of young people from the organisation in which they are leaders, on a social networking site or anywhere on the internet, unless they have written parental consent.

Comments made on the internet should be considered the same as if they were made in a public place. If a child discloses something to a leader via a social networking site, a chat room or any other public domain publishing method, then the disclosure must be dealt with by following the normal reporting process (see Section 3). If a leader is concerned about something that a young person communicates to him or her via the internet, he or she should encourage the child to talk to a suitable adult about it or arrange to meet with the child (within the usual child protection parameters).

It would be wise for leaders not to get involved in lengthy or intense engagements online, setting boundaries is encouraged. While communication via the internet can be highly effective, all such communication with children and young people should, as far as possible, be within an open forum, in order to protect both young people and leaders.

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### **::8.5 COMMUNICATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE VIA MOBILE PHONES**

Those who work with children need to be aware of the opportunities for abuse through the misuse of mobile phone and text messaging. While good use of such media can be beneficial we must be vigilant and alert to the possibilities of misuse and consequent harm that can result to young people. Leaders must also take care to protect themselves and Kirk Sessions should take an active role to ensure that good practice is followed.

Leaders involved in youth and children's work should only have children's mobile numbers if the nature of their involvement requires them to phone or text children. Such leaders might include those running an organisation for older teenagers, or an employed youth worker or a volunteer involved in co-ordinating youth work within the congregation. Kirk Session should be informed which leaders need to contact children for their specific roles.

- ⚡ Parental permission should be sought if the leader in this role will be contacting children via mobile phone.
- ⚡ A method of accountability should be arranged eg copies of texts could also be sent to the minister or to parents.
- ⚡ If a leader has a child's phone number it should only be used for the purposes it has been given ie the leader should not share this information with other church members.
- ⚡ It is recommended that an employed youth worker has a separate phone for work purposes rather than using their personal phone for contacting young people.



### Texting - communication not conversation!

- ∴ Texts should be used for the purposes of reminding young people about events which are forthcoming.
- ∴ Texts can also be used as a means to encourage young people if it is appropriate eg 'hope exam goes ok'.
- ∴ If it turns into a conversation, communications should be ended. A leader can suggest discussing the subject further at the next event or, if they are concerned about the young person arrange to meet up to talk further (within the usual child protection parameters).

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### ∴8.6 DVD MINISTRY

Many congregations now film services for home ministry purposes. Children can be recorded in a group setting, for example, a wide view taken at the children's talk but they should not be identified. The congregation should be given prior notice at least two weeks in advance, either from the pulpit or printed on the announcement sheet and the DVD should not be used for any reason other than its primary purpose.

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# 09

Health & Safety



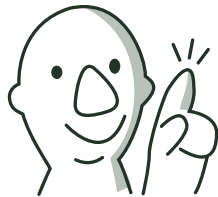
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## 9. HEALTH AND SAFETY

### ::9.1 GENERAL SAFETY

Safety is of prime importance during any activity. The Taking Care guidelines brings together the two agendas of child protection and health and safety in order to create a safe environment for everyone. That is not only the responsibility of the leader in charge but of every leader and helper.



**Always check the premises that you are using to highlight any obvious hazards or potential risks.**

Do your best to have anything removed that should not be there and may cause a significant risk to the members of the group. Adequate supervision should be provided at all times and extra care should be taken when using sports equipment. Areas where maintenance work is taking place should never be used and must be screened off. Committees and Kirk Sessions should keep organisation leaders informed about maintenance work.

Congregations should be aware of the advice included in 'A Guide to Health and Safety for your Local Church' issued to all congregations on behalf of the Presbyterian Church by Peninsula Business Services Limited.

The leader in charge should have:

- :: Access to a phone in case of emergency (make sure there is adequate mobile phone reception if there is no landline on church premises)
- :: Accident report forms readily available
- :: Contact details for all children and young people
- :: Knowledge of how many people are present at each event (in case of an evacuation)

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### ::9.2 RISK ASSESSMENT

The Taking Care risk assessment form is available in Section 12 and should be completed/reviewed for each organisation on at least an annual basis or more frequently in the event of new activities being introduced. A risk assessment form should also be completed for each outing, residential or community/outreach event eg Church auction or Sunday School picnic. There may be times when risk assessments are carried out for a specific purpose or period of time eg an individual with a temporary mobility issue or a leader who is pregnant.

It is the role of the person in charge of the organisation along with others to help them if necessary, to complete the risk assessment form as they will be most familiar with the activities and members of the group.

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The forms should be returned to the appropriate person within or outside the congregational committee. This health and safety representative should collect a completed risk assessment form for each organisation, consider the hazards highlighted and the controls suggested. For example, if the Boys' Brigade Captain highlighted on his risk assessment form that there were potholes in the church car park that were dangerous to the boys and their parents then the health and safety representative should bring this concern to the Church Committee and arrange to have the potholes fixed. It is important that if a risk is identified on a risk assessment form, an adequate control is put in place. Health and safety should be a regular agenda item at Church Committee meetings.

The following guidance will help leaders when completing a risk assessment form:

- ⚡ A hazard is something which may cause harm eg chairs piled high which a small child could climb on to. Hazards should be identified and noted on the risk assessment form.
- ⚡ A risk is the chance that a person may be hurt by a hazard. Risks may vary according to different age groups who attend the organisation eg piled up chairs would not be considered a risk to an older person but would definitely be a risk to a toddler or small child.
- ⚡ A control is something that can be put in place or something that can be changed to limit the risk eg the chairs could be set around the hall instead or only piled together in pairs.



**It may be impossible to remove the risk completely but it is our job to manage it in order to ensure that we can continue with our activities, even those which may be considered high risk!**

Congregations need to demonstrate in the event of an insurance claim that they took 'reasonable care' to protect the children and adults attending their organisations.

### ⚡9.3 INSURANCE

The provision of insurance protection for churches remains a complex issue. The three main areas of cover relate to offsetting legal expenses in the event of a claim; public liability cover relating to claims for inadequate supervision, negligence, etc, and management indemnity to cover errors, omissions, negligent advice or a wrongful act. Churches are advised to contact their insurance broker for more detailed and up to date information on these insurances. See also factsheet on church insurance on Section 12.

### ⚡9.4 HIGH RISK ACTIVITIES

Some activities such as trampolining and bouncy castles are described as 'high risk' by insurance companies. There is a list of high risk activities in Section 12. These activities require a little extra thought and sometimes extra supervision perhaps by trained people. You may also require parental consent depending on what the activity is. Additional

insurance is often needed to cover these higher risk activities; on occasion cover may not be available. Please always plan ahead and check with your insurance broker in advance of the event.

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### **::9.5 FIRE**

All leaders should be aware of the location of fire exits and ensure that access is not obstructed. Leaders should know where the nearest fire extinguishers are located; these must be checked regularly by a qualified person. Fire drills should be conducted to ensure that all members know what evacuation procedure to follow in the event of a real fire.

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### **::9.6 FIRST AID**

Leaders should be aware of any medical conditions or allergies that children have and any medication they are currently taking. This information should be provided on parental consent forms.



**The organisation leader must ensure that this information, along with contact details for parents or carers, is easily accessible to them when the organisation meets and also when on outings, residential programmes and camps.**

Medication should never be given without written consent from parents or doctors; it should be clearly marked and be kept out of reach of children.

Each organisation should have at least one nominated and adequately trained first aider. All leaders should be aware who the first aiders are and alert them in the event of an injury or accident. Once first aid has been administered, an accident form should be completed and leaders should make every effort to communicate with parents/carers what has happened and any treatment that has been given. If a child needs taken to the hospital leaders should make every effort to contact parents/carers as soon as possible. See Section 12 for a sample accident/incident report form and Section 3.1 for more information on accident/incident forms.

A first aid kit should always be available on church premises and at planned events away from the church. It is important that the first aid kit is stocked with all the appropriate in-date items and equipment and that a person has responsibility for replacing items especially if it is used by various organisations within the church.

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# 10

Legal Matters



**TAKINGCARE**  
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## 10. LEGAL MATTERS

### ::10.1 RELEVANT LEGISLATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The main relevant legislation relating to child protection in Northern Ireland includes:

- :: The Criminal Law Act 1967
- :: The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989)
- :: The Children (NI) Order 1995
- :: Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- :: The Sex Offenders Act 1997
- :: The Family Homes and Domestic Violence (NI) Order 1998
- :: The Criminal Justice (Children) (NI) Order 1998
- :: The Human Rights Act 1998
- :: The Sexual Offences Act 2003
- :: Protection of Children & Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order 2003
- :: Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- :: Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007

### ::10.2 RELEVANT LEGISLATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Within the Republic of Ireland the main legislation governing the care and protection of children is:

- :: The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989)
- :: The Child Care Acts 1991
- :: The Domestic Violence Acts 1996
- :: The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998
- :: Children First Guidelines 1999
- :: Freedom of Information Act 2000
- :: Children's Act 2001
- :: Children Trafficking and Prostitution/Sex Offender Act 2001
- :: Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006
- :: Criminal Justice Act 2006

### ::10.3 DATA PROTECTION

Under the Data Protection Act (1998) registered organisations should be aware that they must be careful when handling personal data belonging to children and leaders eg names, phone numbers, addresses and medical information.

Organisations must only hold data which is adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purpose for which it is held. They must ensure that personal data is accurate and where necessary, kept up to date. Organisations must do what they can to prevent unauthorised or accidental access to personal data and must hold data for no longer than necessary. Therefore the following principles should be followed for all organisations in answer to the questions below:

**Where should forms be kept?**

- ∴ All consent forms, accident forms, or any information on children or leaders should be kept in a confidential but accessible location. A locked filing cabinet on church premises is a good example.
- ∴ All consent forms, accident forms, or any information on children or leaders should not be kept in a person's own home for long periods of time.
- ∴ Leaders must ensure that they have easy access to relevant data such as children's contact details and medical information when the organisation is meeting.
- ∴ Incident/accident forms should also be held securely on church premises.

**Who should have access to information on children and leaders?**

- ∴ Information about children and leaders should be on a need-to-know basis.
- ∴ The exception to this is medical information where it is important that all leaders in a supervisory role are aware of conditions that children have.
- ∴ Information about leaders and children should not be given to any external party but only used for the purpose for which it was given.

**What about data kept on computers?**

- ∴ The same rules apply for data kept on computers; data is confidential and should be kept on church premises. In order to keep the data protected, it should be held on a dedicated password protected file.

**How long should records on children and leaders be kept?**

- ∴ Consent forms (basic information such as name, date of birth and address) should be kept for up to six years after the child has left the organisation. Thereafter, it should either be destroyed (ie shredded or burnt) or given back to the child or parent.
  - ∴ The same applies to information on leaders – ie it is retained for up to six years after they have left their position.
  - ∴ Incident/accident forms and the register of all leaders should be kept indefinitely.
-

11

Vulnerable Adults

## 11. VULNERABLE ADULTS

Everyone should be treated with respect and dignity. There are many adults in the Presbyterian Church family, both young and old, who are vulnerable, and they should feel that the Church provides a place of safety and cares for them. Others may become vulnerable for a limited time, following a medical procedure or accident.

### ::11.1 WHO IS A VULNERABLE ADULT?

**A vulnerable adult is anyone aged 18 or over who cannot take care of themselves.\***

Vulnerable adults may not be able to protect themselves against significant harm or unfair treatment. This may be because they have a mental health problem, a disability, visual or hearing problems, are old and frail, or are ill. Because of this, these adults may receive a care service in their own home or in the community. They may live in a residential care home, nursing home or a similar setting.

### ::11.2 WHAT IS ADULT ABUSE?

Adult abuse can take a number of forms and cause victims to suffer pain, fear and distress. Victims may be too afraid or embarrassed to raise any complaint. They may be reluctant to discuss their concerns with other people, or unsure who to trust. There may be some situations where victims are unaware that they are being abused or have difficulty in communicating this to others.

### ::11.3 PROTECTION FOR VULNERABLE ADULTS

#### **What to do if adult abuse is suspected**

It is important that if suspected, adult abuse is reported as soon as possible to PSNI/ An Garda Síochána or Social Services (for contact information, see Section 3.8).

#### **Vetting those who work with vulnerable adults**

##### **Northern Ireland**

At the time of writing, it is necessary for those who apply to work as a volunteer or in a paid post with vulnerable adults in a regulated position to complete the appointment process which includes an Access Northern Ireland form (for more information see Section 5).

##### **Republic of Ireland**

At the time of writing, there is no requirement to vet those working or volunteering in a regulated position with vulnerable adults within the Republic of Ireland.

# 12

Forms, Factsheets  
& Resources

**::12.01 MULTI PURPOSE PARENTAL CONSENT FORM**

Anything written on this form will be held in confidence. The leaders need to know these details in order to meet the specific needs of your child.

Name of Congregation:							
<b>Please tick those attended by your child.</b>							
<input type="checkbox"/>	Boys' Brigade	<input type="checkbox"/>	Youth Fellowship	<input type="checkbox"/>	CE	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bible Class
<input type="checkbox"/>	Guides	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sunday School	<input type="checkbox"/>	Girls' Brigade		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	If other please specify:					

I give permission for my child to attend the organisations which I have marked above at their usual meeting places and participate in all their activities.

Child's full name:		DoB:
Name by which he/she is usually known:		
Address:		
Phone number where I can be contacted in an emergency:		
Home:	Mobile:	
If unavailable contact: Name:		
Phone no (including code):		
Relationship to Child:		
Please indicate medical conditions, special needs, allergies or dietary requirements relevant to your child, any medication being taken and anything else that would be helpful for the leaders to know about:		

In the event of illness or accident, having parental responsibility for the above named child, I give permission for first aid to be administered where considered necessary by a first aider, if available, or medical treatment to be administered by a suitably qualified medical practitioner.

In the event of a medical emergency, leaders will endeavour to contact you as soon as possible using the contact telephone numbers given.

I will inform the leaders of any important changes to my child's health, medication or needs and also of any changes to our address or to any of the phone numbers given above.

During the time your child will spend with us, photographs may be taken for general church purposes and for this we need your permission. On signing this form we will assume that you have given permission for your child's photograph to be taken unless otherwise informed.

<b>I confirm that the above details are correct to the best of my knowledge.</b>		
Signature:	(Parent / Guardian)	Date:

**::12.02 CONSENT FORM FOR SPECIAL OUTINGS**

Name of Congregation:	
Organisation:	
Details of outing/activity/residential:	
Date:	Time:
Method of Transport:	
Cost (if any):	
Collection Arrangements:	
I note the arrangements and give permission for my child to take part in this outing/activity/residential. Print Child's name:	
Please indicate medical conditions, special needs, allergies or dietary requirements relevant to your child, any medication being taken and anything else that would be helpful for the leaders to know about:	

In the event of illness or accident, having parental responsibility for the above named child, I give permission for first aid to be administered where considered necessary by a first aider, if available, or medical treatment to be administered by a suitably qualified medical practitioner.

In the event of a medical emergency, leaders will endeavour to contact you as soon as possible using the contact telephone numbers given.

I will inform the leaders of any important changes to my child's health, medication or needs and also of any changes to our address or to any of the phone numbers given above.

During the time your child will spend with us, photographs may be taken for general church purposes and for this we need your permission. On signing this form we will assume that you have given permission for your child's photograph to be taken unless otherwise informed.

Signed:	Relationship to Child:
<b>Contact Telephone Numbers:</b>	
Home:	Mobile:



### 12.03 CHECKLIST FOR DEVELOPING SAFE PRACTICES

<b>Know the children</b>	
Have defined criteria for membership of the organisation	
Have a registration system for each child: parental consent forms or a sign in sheet	
Keep a record on each child, including medical details, special needs and contact telephone numbers	
<b>Keep records securely and confidentially of</b>	
Attendance	
Accidents – Keep accident / incident forms indefinitely	
Consents given for various activities	
Any complaints or grievances	
Report of Concern Forms and any Record of Meeting Forms	
<b>Pay attention to health and safety matters making sure that</b>	
A Risk Assessment Form has been completed	
Any buildings being used are safe and meet required standards	
There is sufficient heating and ventilation	
Toilets, shower areas and washing facilities are up to standard	
Fire precautions are in place	
There is access to a landline telephone or adequate mobile phone reception	
Equipment is checked regularly	
Insurance cover is adequate	
<b>It is important to ensure that</b>	
Children are not left unattended	
Adequate numbers of leaders of both sexes are available to supervise the activities	
Leaders know at all times where children are and what they are doing	
Any activity using potentially dangerous equipment has constant adult supervision	
Dangerous behaviour is not allowed	
<b>If the activities involve staying away from home overnight, attention should also be paid to the following</b>	
Safe methods of transport	
Adequate insurance, to cover all aspects of the trip	
Written parental consent	
Any information about the children which may be relevant to staying away overnight, such as allergies, medical conditions, dietary requirements or special needs	
Appropriate and well supervised sleeping arrangements	
Respect for the privacy of children and young people in dormitories, changing rooms, showers and toilets	



<b>Discipline and challenging behaviour</b>	
<b>Leaders need to be trained and prepared for coping with disruptive behaviour, it is recommended that:</b>	
More than one leader is present when challenging behaviour is being dealt with	
An incident form is used to record any incidents	
A record is kept in a report book, describing what happened, the circumstances, who was involved, any injury to a person or to property and how the situation was resolved	

<b>Providing training, including</b>	
All leaders must attend Taking Care Training	
Induction training provided for new starts	
Further training needs identified and organised if required e.g. First Aid	

**::12.04 REFERENCE REQUEST FORM**

Reference for:
The above named person has volunteered for the position of:
In Congregation:

<b>1.</b> How long have you known the applicant? _____ years						
<b>2.</b> In what capacity do you know the applicant?						
<b>3.</b> How would you rate him/her as suitable for the above position? 1 = Excellent 2 = Very Good 3 = Good 4 = Satisfactory 5 = Poor 6 = Unknown						
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Relationship with children and young people?						
Experience in working with children and young people?						
Ability to relate to other leaders?						
Energy/commitment?						
Flexibility and approach?						
Self motivation?						
Ability to act on own initiative?						
Ability to act as part of a team?						

<b>Any additional information including other church involvement and Christian commitment which you feel may be relevant</b>						

Name:	Signature:	Date:





**12.06 REGISTER OF ALL LEADERS AND HELPERS**

**MASTER COPY**

Name of Organisation:		Name	Address	Contact Tel Number	Date of Commencement	Date of Resignation within the last year	Position in Organisation (Captain, Leader etc)
Name	Address						

<b>Signed</b>	(Leader in Charge)	(Minister/Clerk of Session)
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**12.07 REGISTER OF ALL LEADERS AND HELPERS WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ANNUAL UPDATE 20\_\_/20\_\_**

Name of Organisation:						
Name	Address	Contact Tel Number	Date of Commencement	Date of Resignation within the last year	Position in Organisation (Captain, Leader etc)	

**Signed** \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Leader in Charge) \_\_\_\_\_ (Minister/Clerk of Session)



**::12.08 REPORT OF CONCERN**

Please use this form to record any concern you have about a child. If you need help in completing this form please talk to the leader in charge of your organisation or the Designated Person. The completed form will be given by the organisation leader to the Designated Person.

Child's Name:		
Address:		
Age:	DoB:	Tel. No:

State, as clearly as possible, why you are concerned, from whom you received the information and when. If possible include the details of the person(s) causing concern in relation to the child. Continue overleaf if necessary.

What is the nature of the concern?
Are there any visible injuries?
Has medical attention been sought / necessary?
Have there been any previous concerns?
Other relevant information?

**Details of Person reporting concerns**

Name:	
Address:	
Telephone Number:	
Signed:	Organisation:
Date:	



**::12.09 STANDARD REPORTING FOR REPUBLIC OF IRELAND**

To Duty Social Work Service

In case of Emergency or outside Health Board hours, contact should be made with An Garda Síochána.

<b>1. Details of Child</b>			
Name:	Male:	Female:	
Address:	Age/DoB:	School:	
<b>1a. Details of Parents</b>			
Name of Mother:		Name of Father:	
Address of Mother if different to Child:		Address of Father if different to Child:	
Telephone Number:		Telephone Number:	
<b>1b. Care and Custody arrangements regarding child, if known</b>			
<b>1c. Household Composition (NOTE: a separate form must be completed in respect of each child being reported).</b>			
Name	Relationship to Child	Date of Birth	Additional Information E.g. school/ occupation
<b>2. Details of concern(s), allegation(s) or incident(s) dates, times who was present, description of any observed injuries, parent's view(s), child's view(s) if known. (Use additional sheet if necessary).</b>			
<b>3. Details of person(s) allegedly causing concern in relation to the child:</b>			
Name:	Age:	Male:	Female:
Address:	Relationship to Child:	Occupation:	

4. Name and Address of other personnel or agencies involved with this child	
Social Workers:	School:
Public Health Nurse:	Gardai:
GP:	Pre-School/Crèche/Youth Club:
Hospital:	Other, Specify e.g. Youth Groups, After School Clubs:

5. Are Parents/Legal Guardians aware of this referral to the Social Work Department?			
If yes, what is their attitude?:		YES	NO

6. Details of Person reporting concern(s):	
Name:	Occupation:
Address:	Telephone Number:
Nature and extend of contact with Child/Family:	

7. Details of Person completing form:	
Name:	Occupation:
Address:	Telephone Number:
Signed:	Date:



**::12.10 RECORD OF MEETING FORM**

Date of Meeting:
Names of those present:
Details of concern (be clear about what is fact):
What has the child/young person said (if anything):

<b>Decision reached</b> – choose at least one of the following options: Please tick those selected.	
	1. Take no further action. Why?
	2. Talk to the parents/carers. Why?  Who will do this?
	3. Arrange a discussion with an outside body. Why?  With whom?  Who will do this?
	4. Make a formal report to social services or Police/An Garda Síochána. Why?  Who will do this?
	5. Has the Taking Care Office been contacted for advice or to report?

<b>Signatures of those present:</b>	<b>Print Name:</b>



**::12.11 ACCIDENT / INCIDENT FORM**

This form should be completed immediately after any accident or significant incident. Once completed, please store confidentially on church premises and keep indefinitely. The worker should discuss with the Minister if follow up action is required.

Day:	Date:	Time:
Name, contact details and ages of those involved in the accident/incident		
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
Where did this accident/incident take place?		
Who is normally responsible for the group? (Name, address and telephone number)		
<b>Who witnessed the accident/incident? (Names, addresses, telephone numbers and ages if under 16). Normally only two witnesses would be needed.</b>		
Describe the accident/incident. (Include injuries received and any first aid or medical treatment given)		
Continue on separate sheet if necessary.		

<b>Please tick the following as appropriate</b>						
Have you retained any defective equipment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>	NONE INVOLVED
If so, where is it being kept and by whom?						
What action have you taken to prevent a recurrence of the accident/incident?						

Is the site or premises still safe for your group to use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
Is the equipment still safe for your group to use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
Have the parents/carers been informed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO

Date:	Time:
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Has Designated Person been informed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
Has Minister been informed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO
Has Leader in charge been informed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO

<b>Signature of person in charge of group at time of accident/incident</b>		
Signed:	PRINT Name:	Date:

<b>Form seen by Minister/Leader in charge</b>		
Signed:	PRINT Name:	Date:



**12.13 RISK ASSESSMENT (EXAMPLE)**

Name of Organisation/Event: Sunday School		Date Undertaken: 4th March 2011		By Whom: Mrs.Superintendent	
Hazard	Area	Who might be harmed?	Existing Controls – what is already in place to minimise the risk?	Action – what are you going to do in order to minimise the risk?	Date Achieved
Lead for overhead projector which is used only during praise time.	Front of hall	Children who have to go to the front of the hall for their class	The children are warned to walk carefully past the lead.	I have decided that once praise time is over the lead will be removed so it will no longer be out when children are walking past it.	
Spare chairs which are stacked.	Back of the hall	Children who sit on them while waiting for their parents to collect them.	There is no existing control in place.	I am going to speak to the caretaker to see if the spare chairs can be stored in the cupboard or else set out separately around the hall before Sunday School.	
Scissors used for the craft activity.	Classes 1 and 2	Younger children.	They have leaders to help them but this means the children do not get to do the cutting and some insist on doing it themselves which can be a behaviour issue as well as a safety one.	I am going to purchase some more suitable scissors for this younger age group.	
One of the Fire Exit doors is always blocked by cleaning materials.	Hallway between main hall and minor hall	Children, leaders and helpers if there was a fire and we could not use the nearest exit.	There is no existing control in place.	I am going to speak to the property committee convenor about this tomorrow which is of utmost importance and a risk not just to Sunday School but every organisation using the hall.	

**Signed**



**::12.15 REGISTRATION OF DESIGNATED PERSON**

Name of Congregation:
Name of Applicant:

**Please outline any:**

Previous / current experience of working with children:

--

Knowledge of child protection issues:

--

**Contact Information**

Address:

--

**Phone Numbers**

Home:

Work:

Mobile:

Email:


**How would you prefer to receive Taking Care Updates?**

<input type="checkbox"/> By Post	<input type="checkbox"/> By Email
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## **::12.16 COMMON PROTOCOL FOR CHURCHES WORKING WITH INDEPENDENT ORGANISATIONS**

(The Church of Ireland, The Presbyterian Church in Ireland, The Methodist Church in Ireland)

A Common Protocol for Churches relating to Independent Organisations working with children and young people.

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **The Context**

The Church of Ireland, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and the Methodist Church in Ireland (hereafter referred to as the Churches) each have their own Child Protection Guidelines. It is considered helpful if these Guidelines substantially agree with each other in respect of minimum standards of good practice in dealing with children and young people. As each set of Church Guidelines is based upon either Getting it Right and Our Duty to Care (N. Ireland) or Children First and Child Protection for the Youth Work Sector (Rep. of Ireland), we believe that they do substantially agree in their policy and procedures while allowing for flexibility of practice depending on the individual Church's structure of government and administration.

It is recognised that it would also be helpful if the Churches agreed a common protocol for dealing with external organisations which regularly use church premises. This document seeks to clarify the expectations and responsibilities of both the churches and the independent organisations, especially in the areas of child protection policy, appointment of leaders, information sharing and reporting of concerns that may arise within an organisation.

#### **Definitions**

An independent organisation is a group that while not operated by the church, nonetheless uses church premises. Such organisations may be specifically youth organisations, or may be organisations which occasionally work with children e.g. St John Ambulance.

The organisation may have an outside headquarters and a separate method for the appointment of leaders e.g. Scouts, Crusaders, Guides. Although some of the leaders may attend the local host church they are not appointed by the church and are not directly responsible to the church.

There are also youth organisations which are operated by local churches, but which also have outside headquarters, such as BB and GB. The leaders are appointed or approved by the church but with a measure of involvement and training by the outside headquarters. The principles and the criteria below are also relevant to this type of organisation, and normally will be met by the organisation. However if this is not the case the requirements stated below will apply.

### **1 General Guiding Principles**

- 1.1** In all our practice the Churches and organisations agree that the welfare and safety of children is the paramount consideration.
- 1.2** It is recognised that churches and organisations are interdependent and it is therefore vital that constructive working relationships are developed and maintained.
- 1.3** If an organisation using church premises is operated independently of the local church, while the church will not be responsible for the appointment of leaders or general running of the organisation, it is recognised that the Church still has some interest in the organisation being run to an acceptable standard. The Church has a responsibility for what happens on Church property and the Church will give formal permission for the organisation / unit to use the premises. It is recognised that even if an organisation is independent of the church, the public's perception may be that it is still a church organisation.
- 1.4** If a church has concerns that certain practices breach child protection guidelines, such concerns should be raised with the organisation leader and/or the headquarters of the organisation. If the concerns are not satisfactorily dealt with the host church may withdraw permission for use of the premises by that organisation.
- 1.5** While the church is not to be responsible for the appointment of leaders to an independent organisation it is good practice for the Kirk Session / Parish Panel / Church Council to be informed annually (September) of the names of the leaders in writing.
- 1.6** This protocol should be reviewed on an annual basis at a meeting of the Inter-Church Child Protection Group and representatives of independent organisations, in the light of any revision of church or organisation policies.



## 2 Agreed Criteria

The churches suggest that the following criteria be agreed with independent organisations using church premises, e.g. Scouts, Guides, Crusaders, Christian Endeavour and other groups.

It is the duty of the organisation to ensure that the premises are suitable and appropriate for planned activities. The organisation shall also seek to ensure that activities shall be carried out safely. Any safety concerns regarding the premises shall be notified by the organisation leader to the appropriate person within the church as soon as possible.

- 2.1** The organisation shall confirm to the local church that it has adopted and consistently implements a child protection policy which accords with the standard of Getting it Right and Our Duty to Care (NI) or Children First and Child Protection for the Youth Work Sector (RoI). A copy of the organisation's policy shall be supplied to the Kirk Session / Parish Panel / Church Council or written verification that the policy is accepted by the church at central level.
- 2.2** The local church shall supply to the organisation leader the names and contact details of the church officials responsible for the premises. The organisation shall supply to the Kirk Session / Parish Panel / Church Council the names and contact details of all the leaders immediately following appointment. The organisation shall confirm that new appointees have been (NI) subject to a Access(NI) check or (RoI) have been vetted where possible; that no information was received which debarred their appointment and they have been found suitable to work with children and young people.
- 2.3** The organisation shall ensure that leaders and helpers in the organisation receive appropriate child protection training and are aware of the organisation's reporting procedures.
- 2.4** If a report has been made by the organisation of a child protection concern, suspicion or allegation through its procedures, the person(s) responsible for child protection in the local church should be informed in confidence that a report has been made.
- 2.5** The organisation shall supply written confirmation from the insurer that adequate insurance cover is in place for the organisation's activities or written verification that the insurance policy of the organisation is accepted by the Church at central level.
- 2.6** A Form of Approval (sample below) shall be signed by the leader of the organisation / unit and a church representative confirming that the conditions have been met. It is appropriate for this to be completed annually or at least every three years depending upon church requirements.

## 3 Boys' Brigade (NI) And Girls' Brigade (NI)

These are organisations which are operated by the local church but also have a separate external headquarters. Thus, there is a measure of independent input to these organisations and the following is suggested as good practice to avoid unnecessary duplication and communication breakdown.

- 3.1** Leaders are nominated and approved by the local church and appointed by the Boys' Brigade. Leaders are jointly accountable to the local church and to the Boys' Brigade.
- 3.2** For BB it is necessary to complete both the BB Appointment Form and the church's Application Form.
- 3.3** For GB the church's Application Form only is completed.
- 3.4** The BB/GB should use the church's procedure for reporting concerns.
- 3.5** The BB/GB should submit a list of its officers/helpers and contact details to the Kirk Session / Parish Panel / Church Council each September.
- 3.6** The church shall confirm in writing to the BB/GB that the appointment procedure (including AccessNI check) has been completed, before any new appointee is approved for BB/GB registration and training.
- 3.7** The church shall provide appropriate child protection training for new appointees.
- 3.8** All leaders must sign a declaration that they shall uphold the church's Child Protection policy.

**::SAMPLE FORM OF APPROVAL FOR INDEPENDENT ORGANISATIONS WISHING TO USE CHURCH PREMISES.**

Name of church	
Name of organisation	
Name of person in charge of organisation	Tel. No
Time and place of organisation's meeting	

**CONDITIONS**

1. The organisation confirms that it has adopted and implements a child protection policy which accords with the standard of either Getting it Right and Our Duty to Care (N Ireland) or Children First and Child Protection for the Youth Work Sector (Rep.of Ireland). A copy of the organisation's policy is now produced or written verification that the policy is accepted by the Church at central level.
2. The local church shall supply to the organisation leader the names and contact details of the church officials responsible for the premises and for child protection. The organisation shall supply annually (September) to the Kirk Session / Parish Panel / Church Council the names and contact details of all leaders immediately following appointment. The organisation shall confirm that new appointees have been (NI) subject to a AccessNI check or (RI) have been vetted where possible; that no information was received which debarred their appointment and they have been found suitable to work with children and young people.
3. The organisation shall ensure that leaders/helpers in the organisation shall receive appropriate child protection training and are aware of the reporting procedures.
4. If a report is made by the organisation of a child protection concern through its procedures, the person responsible for child protection in the local church should be informed in confidence that a report has been made.
5. The organisation confirms that adequate insurance cover is in place for its activities (copy of policy attached), or written verification that the insurance policy is accepted by the Church at central level.

The organisation shall seek to ensure that activities shall be carried out safely. Any safety concerns regarding the premises shall be notified by the organisation leader to the appropriate person within the church as soon as possible.

**We confirm that the church and the organisation agree to the above conditions.**

Signed:	(Organisation Leader)
Date:	

**PLEASE TICK AS APPLICABLE:**

<input type="checkbox"/>	The church grants the above organisation use of the premises
OR	
<input type="checkbox"/>	The church grants the above organisation use of the premises in accordance with the attached agreement.
Signed:	
(Clerk of Session / Secretary of the Select Vestry / Secretary of the Church Council)	
Date:	

## ::12.17 DESIGNATED PERSON FACTSHEET

### The Appointment of a Designated Person

Every Kirk Session must appoint at least one Designated Person for Child Protection.

The appointment of a Designated Person is a very important one and should be considered carefully.

### Who should be appointed as the Designated Person?

- :: Someone whose occupations, or lengthy voluntary experience, have brought them into contact with children.
- :: **NOT** the Minister or Clerk of Session
- :: **NOT** someone who is employed by the congregation as a Youth/Children's Worker
- :: **NOT** someone heavily involved in youth/children's work within the congregation

The Designated Person should complete the Designated Person's application form before they are formally appointed.

### Support for the Designated Person

Once appointed, the Designated Person(s) should be supported in their role by Kirk Session. It should always be remembered that the Designated Person is fulfilling a role to help Kirk Session who remain responsible for child protection within the congregation.

Depending on the size of the congregation and the number of leaders and children that they work with, the Kirk Session may wish to appoint two people to the role. The Kirk Session may want to use office staff to undertake the administrative work for the Designated Person and/or they may wish to appoint a small committee to consider the implementation of the Taking Care programme within the congregation.

### The Role of the Designated Person

There are five main roles of the Designated Person:-

1. To be consulted with if a child protection situation arises.
2. To organise Taking Care Training for leaders within the congregation.
3. To oversee the appointment process for new leaders including co-ordinating the distribution of applications forms and making sure that leaders are vetted where appropriate and reference request forms are sent.
4. To remain a point of contact with the Taking Care Office so that relevant information regarding conferences and Newsletters etc can be communicated.
5. To report to Kirk Session on a regular basis about any child protection issues, this does not necessarily include specific details about a child protection incident (as this information may have to remain confidential).

## **::12.18 WORKING WITH CHILDREN WHO HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS**

All children are special to God and so His church should be a place where all children, no matter what their abilities, are welcome and included. Every child should be treated with respect and dignity. The Bible clearly teaches that despite our differences we are all special to God.

### **Planning your programme**

- :: Focus on what a child can do, rather than what they can't do.
- :: Aim to be inclusive, think about how the activities can be amended to include a child who has special needs within the group.
- :: Try teaching to different learning styles e.g. a drama or DVD instead of reading.
- :: Children who have special needs may interact well with action songs, puppet ministry, instruments, visual and audio stimuli.
- :: Be age appropriate.

### **Extra help**

- :: Ask the expert – the child's parents or carers to find out how the child's needs are best met at home or school. For example, do they use pictures or Makaton to communicate?
- :: Consider appointing a one to one leader for a child with Special Needs who works with the child each week and liaises with the parents/carers.
- :: Research conditions/circumstances to find out about how you can best support the child in the group.

### **Personal Care**

- :: If a child needs help with toileting or more intimate care, respect their dignity.
- :: Try to have the same leader involved in helping them.
- :: Draw up a personal care plan (see Section 12).

### **Think about!**

- :: Children with disabilities and special needs should be with children in the same age group.
- :: Consider using a reward system to encourage a child.
- :: Check if there are any triggers for behaviour problems e.g. loud noises or eating/drinking problems.

There is a lot more information on working with children who have special needs available from the Taking Care Office. Please contact us to find out about the resources available.



**::12.19 PERSONAL CARE PLAN**

Name:	Date drawn up:
<b>Information for Leaders</b>	
<b>Toileting</b> e.g. needs help with buttons/zips	
<b>Eating/drinking</b> e.g. drinks from his own cup	
<b>Medical</b> e.g. needs to use inhaler if out of breath	
<b>Behaviour</b> e.g. reacts badly to loud noises	
<b>Mobility</b> e.g. has difficulty running and jumping	
<b>Likes/Dislikes</b> e.g. likes stickers, does not like colouring in	



### 12.20 PERSONAL CARE LOG

Name:	Date:
<b>Information for Parents</b>	
<b>Toileting</b> e.g. went to the toilet at 7:15pm and 8:05pm with (Leader)	
<b>Eating/drinking</b> e.g. drank juice, refused snack	
<b>Medical</b> e.g. did not need to use inhaler	
<b>Behaviour</b> e.g. interacted well with other children and leaders	
<b>Mobility</b> e.g. wasn't able to join in the basketball game but enjoyed passing the ball with (Leader)	
<b>Likes/Dislikes</b> e.g. liked watching the drama, did not like it when the balloon burst	

**::12.21 COMPUTER CONTRACT**

- ⚡ I will only use the computer when there is a member of staff or volunteer present.
- ⚡ I will only use websites and programmes that a member of staff or volunteer has chosen or approves.
- ⚡ I will not go on to social networking sites or chat rooms.
- ⚡ I will only log on using my own login and password.
- ⚡ I will not share my password with others.
- ⚡ I will only send emails that are polite and friendly and not use rude language.
- ⚡ I will not share personal information with other people over the internet.
- ⚡ If I come across anything I am uncomfortable with whilst on the computer I will tell an adult.
- ⚡ I will ask permission before printing anything.

**I agree to keep to the contract.**

Signed:

(Child)

**I have read through this agreement with my child and agree to these safety restrictions.**

Signed:

(Parent/Carer)

**::12.22 CODE OF CONDUCT**

As members of this organisation we will:

1. Respect our leaders and helpers.
2. Respect the views and feelings of other members.
3. Respect the right of every member to express their views.
4. Respect the right of every member to be heard/listened to.
5. Respect leaders' and helpers' and other members' personal privacy and property.
6. Take care of equipment and property.
7. Not engage in any of the following activities or behaviour:
  - (i) Consumption of alcohol, the use of drugs and smoking during organisation activities, whether within the confines of the organisation building or otherwise.
  - (ii) Physical abuse of other members, leaders and helpers.
  - (iii) Verbal abuse including "put-downs" of other club members and leaders and helpers, either directly or electronically e.g. mobile phones, chat rooms etc.
  - (iv) Destruction or damage of property or equipment.

**When implementing the code of conduct, leaders need to be insistent, consistent and persistent.**

**I agree to keep to the contract.**

Signed:

(Child)

**I have read through this agreement with my child and agree to these safety restrictions.**

Signed:

(Parent/Carer)



**::12.23 CHILD PROTECTION POLICY REVIEW**

1. What developments has the congregation made in the following areas?
2. What issues have come up in the following areas?
3. What action needs to be taken in the following areas?

1. Leadership
2. Training
3. Reporting of Concerns
4. The Designated Person(s)
5. Parental Consent Forms
<b>6. Good Standards of Practice:</b>
- Physical Contact
- Ratios

- Transport
- Residential Programmes and Outings
- Church Sleepovers
- Photographs
- Working with Children who have Special Needs
7. Working Together
8. Technology
9. Health and Safety
10. Implementation and Review

## **::12.24 INSURANCE FACTSHEET**

A Church represents a complex risk due to the diversity of activity that goes on within and without its walls.

Thirty plus years of experience has shown us a vast array of issues but even now there is still hardly a week goes by that new queries arise that we have not seen before. It would therefore be impossible within the context of this document to address all the issues but we have attempted to provide some pointers which we hope will assist you.

At the request of Church House, the contents of this fact sheet are concentrated on Youth Activities and represent the position of the insurance cover offered under our Congregational Facility with whom most Presbyterian Churches are insured. Should your Church be insured with a different provider we will of course, if at all possible, be able to provide any clarification that you may require upon request.

### **Public Liability**

This section of cover is the main area under which most claims for accidental bodily injury or loss of or damage to the property of a third party arising from Church run activities will fall.

The Church insurance policy is designed to cover all those Church type activities that have been undertaken for years both in and away from the Church building such as team relay games, football, volleyball, basketball, rambling, Sunday School days away, visits to the swimming pool, pony trekking at approved Centres, weekend retreats etc. It is not designed to automatically include hazardous activities such as rock climbing, canoeing and as otherwise indicated below.

Scouts, Guides, Boys' Brigade and the Girl's Brigade do of course have their own specific insurance as provided via annual capitation fees which provides very wide protection and automatically covers most of their activities. These uniformed organisations should therefore check the full extent of the cover provided with their headquarters directly.

The Church policy will provide public liability cover for those persons deemed to be under age attending these organisations on the basis that they will not undertake any hazardous activities.

The day to day activities of all other affiliated Church organisations fall under the Church policy and therefore are subject to its exclusions, conditions and warranties.

It should be remembered that the policy of insurance in place belongs to the "Church" and not to any other legal entity. Although an organisation may be affiliated to the Church if it is subject to the rules and regulations of a separate board of trustees or to a separate and distinct code of conduct for example, at law such an organisation may be considered a legal entity in its own right and therefore would have to be insured under a standalone policy.

Should organisations other than Scouts, Guides, Boys' Brigade or Girl's Brigade within the Church wish to undertake a hazardous activity please ensure that the Church Secretary is informed well in advance so as any insurance extension necessary can be put in place.

### **Personal Accident**

Personal Accident cover is provided for officers/leaders of the Church who may suffer injury during a Church organised activity. The exclusion of hazardous activities equally applies to this section of cover.

### **"Hazardous Activities"**

In the list that follows we have detailed not only the most obvious type of activities that would be excluded but also those for which we have received enquiries over the years. We have categorised these into high, medium and low risk.

Hopefully you will appreciate that the type of activities listed within the “high” category are those that could not constitute a “normal Church type activity”. As such it has not been possible in the past to persuade insurers to offer cover, unless they are undertaken at outdoor pursuit’s centres that provide their own equipment, leadership and insurance.

For the activities listed in the other categories cover can usually be included following referral to Oval James.

Referral to us may simply involve the provision of some risk management advice on the one hand or result in the payment of an additional premium on the other.

For those activities that are referred to us we often will require the following additional information:

- ⚡ Leader numbers, experience & qualifications
- ⚡ Number of children
- ⚡ Supervision ratios
- ⚡ Dates & timescale
- ⚡ Information on any past incidents

<b>High Risk Activities:</b>	
Water Sports including Rafting	Potholing
Regattas	Racing other than on foot
Flying	Bonfires
Hang Gliding	Firework Displays
Hot Air Ballooning	Use of firearms including Clay Pigeon Shooting, Paint Ball & Try Skirmishing
Parachuting	Use power driven machinery / Tree Felling & Lopping
Any air-side activity	Winter Sports
Hunting on horseback	Physical Contact Sports (e.g. boxing, fencing, martial arts)
Motor Vehicles, Competitions / Go Karting	Overseas Building Projects
Motor Cycling	Mountain Biking
Mountaineering	Rugby
Cliff or Rock Climbing	American Football
Hazardous Activity weekends	Skateboarding

<b>Medium Risk Activities:</b>	
Bouncy Castles/Bungee Runs & other Inflatable Equipment	Building Projects deemed to go beyond routine maintenance
Tractor Rides	Street Reach / Street BBQ's / "Party in the Park" type events
Gymkhana/Pony Rides/Rodeo Bull	Sleepovers in Church Premises
Archery/Rifle Shooting/Crockery Smashes/Darts Stall	Ice Skating
Mini Assault Courses, indoor and outdoor Fairground Rides	Overseas Travel
"It's a Knockout" Competitions	Products Exported Overseas
Football Competitions & Sports Camps	

<b>Low Risk Activities:</b>	
Art Exhibitions/Flower Festivals/Auctions	
Sponsored Walks/Fun Runs	

The list should not be considered exhausted. Any similar activities to those listed will be treated in the same manner.

Should the Church feel that any particular activity is hazardous or outside the scope of a 'normal church activity' the details should be referred to us.

### **Apart from Activities, other commonly asked questions include:**

#### **Use of Vehicles**

Where non-Church owned vehicles are used on Church "business" insurance cover should be provided by the vehicle driver's policy. The driver's policy must therefore be adequate and not rendered invalid by, for example, overloading. It would be prudent for the vehicle owner to inform his/her car insurance company of their role as a Youth Leader – for which you should not encounter additional terms being imposed. We also suggest that the Church may wish to make leaders and others aware of this issue. A sample can be provided on request.

#### **Indemnity Agreements**

If asked to sign one – **DON'T!** Commonly such agreements attempt to impose a liability on the Church for matters not only outside your control but also beyond common law and therefore beyond the protection afforded by your insurance policy.

#### **Ages**

Our policy does not contain any restrictions in cover relating to the age of children attending Church Organisations.

#### **Adult to Child Supervision Ratios**

Our policy does not contain specific guidance on ratios however the general "reasonable care condition" applies. Reasonable Care would be judged on the basis of the recommended ratios set out within Taking Care.

#### **Cover Away from Church**

Non-hazardous activities [such as day trips/residential programmes] are covered free from charge.

#### **Church Fetes**

Generally the events undertaken at Church Fetes are considered non-hazardous and are therefore covered automatically. If however the likes of a Bouncy Castle is to be used, then this should be referred.

#### **Maintenance Work/Building Projects/Overseas**

Additional Insurances may be required. Refer to Oval James for specific advice.

#### **Child Protection**

Taking Care should be adopted and implemented as this is considered the yardstick on which any decision would be made, with regard to where liability rests / whether cover will be offered in the event of a claim.

#### **Legislation/Health & Safety/Risk Assessments**

Your Church should be complying as far as reasonably practicable with all appropriate Health & Safety and other legislation in order to ensure that your premises are a safe environment. Youth groups can play an important part in this process by, in particular, reporting defects in premises to an appointed person. A joint liaison approach between Church Committee and Youth Organisations will benefit all in the mitigation of hazards that could have the potential to cause injury or loss.

**Claims**

Incidents can happen that result in a claim against the Church. Churches should therefore have a formal reporting procedure for incidents that result in injury, loss or damage. Such incidents should then be reported to Oval James in order to protect your interests should a formal claim be taken at some time in the future.

This fact sheet has been produced by Oval James who act as Insurance Brokers for the majority of Presbyterian Churches in Ireland. Any queries regarding the content of this document or on any other insurance related matter can be addressed in the first instance to:

**Mr Gary Proctor, Divisional Director**

**Oval James**

Metropolitan Building

29/31 Alfred Street

Belfast BT2 8ED

Tel: **(028) 9024 1651** Fax: **(028) 9024 0441**

Email: **[gary.proctor@ovaljames.com](mailto:gary.proctor@ovaljames.com)**

## **::12.25 CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

### **Creating a safe environment for children, young people, leaders and staff**

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland reaches out to children and young people throughout Ireland and welcomes those from households where there is no Presbyterian or other denominational connection. We have a legal duty of care to look after all children and provide a safe environment for them as best we can.

Parents/carers expect the church to have and enforce a child protection policy. This policy is aimed at creating an environment where children and young people may enjoy social contact, personal and spiritual development and where they and the leaders and helpers working with them will be kept safe.

### **Adoption of Presbyterian Church in Ireland Child Protection Guidelines**

The Kirk Session of \_\_\_\_\_ Presbyterian Church has adopted the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's child protection guidelines, Taking Care, approved by the General Assembly and revised in 2011. All organisations must adhere to these guidelines as agreed by the General Assembly in 2008. The Kirk Session will review the policy every three years and keep Taking Care on the agenda of the Kirk Session meetings.

#### **1. Leadership**

The Kirk Session believes that the recruitment and appointment process outlined in the Taking Care guidelines greatly assist the assessment of a person's suitability to work with children and young people. As a result of implementing such procedures, leaders and helpers within this congregation will be more assured of their position and of the confidence placed in them by the Kirk Session.

#### **The following procedures must be followed for the appointment of leaders who are 18 years and over:**

- 1)** All leaders will be required to complete an application form for leaders.
- 2)** The application form includes the vetting process according to legislation and good practice.
- 3)** The Kirk Session will appoint up to two interviewers to meet informally with the applicant.  
At the interview the child protection policy will be provided and explained, 'We Care 4 U Too!' will also be provided.
- 4)** Applicants will be required to provide two references by persons who are not relatives.
- 5)** A letter of approval will be sent to the Designated Person from the Taking Care Office.

#### **2. Training**

Leaders and helpers who work with children and young people should attend Taking Care training on a regular basis (as church policy or legislation demands). Even those who have a good knowledge of child protection issues in another field should attend as Taking Care Training is the only training available that is specifically dealing with church activities within a church environment.

#### **3. Reporting of Concerns**

The leaders in each of our organisations will be fully conversant with the reporting procedure where there is a concern about the welfare of a child, as outlined in the Taking Care guidelines. Leaders must not hesitate to report a concern about a child if they are at any time worried about their welfare.



#### 4. The Designated Person

The Kirk Session has appointed the following Designated Person(s):-

---

The Designated Person(s) will give advice and support to organisations and to the Kirk Session on matters concerning the welfare of children and young people. The Kirk Session will keep organisational leaders updated with the name of the Designated Person(s). Any matter brought to the attention of the Designated Person will be treated in strict confidence. Information will be divulged only where there is a legitimate need to know.

#### 5. Parental Consent Forms

Organisational leaders must ensure that they have home contact numbers, parental consent and medical information regarding the children in the organisations which they are working with. Special consent forms will be issued for any 'off the premises' activity and residential programmes.

#### 6. Good Standards of Practice

Each organisation will be expected to comply with good standards of practice as outlined in the Taking Care guidelines. This includes: physical contact, recommended ratios, transport, residential programmes and outings, church sleepovers, photographs and working with children who have special needs.

#### 7. Working Together

It is important that all leaders know the boundaries and rules of an organisation and that these are explained to children and parents. A code of conduct for children and young people will be drawn up at the commencement of the year's activities in each organisation. A code of conduct will help to create a safe, secure environment and an atmosphere where children will feel that they can relate to the leaders and helpers.

**All leaders must abide by the discipline guidelines as set out in Taking Care.**

#### 8. Technology

Leaders should limit the direct Internet communication they have with individual children and young people in the organisation of which they are leaders. All such communication with children and young people should, as far as possible, be within an open forum; in order to protect both young people and leaders. Leaders should be wise as to how they use this form of communication.

Leaders should not post photographs of young people from the organisation in which they are leaders, on a social networking site or anywhere on the Internet, unless they have written parental consent.

Leaders involved in Youth and Children's work should only have children's mobile numbers if the nature of their involvement requires them to phone or text children and if this is the case, contacting children through the use of mobile phones should be done in line with the Taking Care guidelines.

#### 9. Health and Safety

The Kirk Session expects organisations to adhere to the guidance on health and safety matters outlined in the Taking Care guidelines. A Risk Assessment form should be completed for each organisation as well as for any outings or occasional events. Leaders will be informed of fire and first aid procedures.

#### 10. Implementation and Review

The Kirk Session is responsible for overseeing the implementation of this policy and will review it every three years.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ (Minister) \_\_\_\_\_ (Clerk of Session)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Designated Person/s)

## **::12.26 ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

All kinds of bullying are wrong and should not be tolerated within organisations of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Our organisations should be a safe and welcoming place for all children and young people.

### **What is bullying?**

The government defines bullying as; "Deliberately hurtful behaviour repeated often over a period of time" .

### **What forms does it take?**

- :: Bullying can be name calling or teasing.
- :: Bullying is often physical; victims are pushed, punched, kicked and hit.
- :: Victims can be forced to do things they don't want to do, are left out of games or ignored by others.
- :: Cyber bullying is when bullies contact their victims via text messaging or via the Internet.

### **Why do we have a bullying policy?**

- :: All leaders, parents and children who attend this organisation should have an understanding of what bullying is and know that it is not tolerated within the organisation.
- :: All leaders should know what to do if bullying arises.
- :: As an organisation we take bullying seriously, children and parents should be assured that they would be supported when bullying is reported.

### **Why is it important to respond to Bullying?**

- :: Bullying hurts.
- :: Everyone has the right to be treated with respect.
- :: Individuals who are bullying need to learn to stop.
- :: This organisation has a responsibility to respond effectively to bullying issues.

### **Preventative Measures**

- :: Leaders should encourage children to befriend others who are alone within the group.
- :: Bullying should be discussed openly within the group, perhaps through activities such as circle time.
- :: Young people should regularly be encouraged to talk to leaders about anything that is bothering them.

### **What will happen if bullying occurs?**

1. Attempt reconciliation by getting the parties together to talk, it may be that a genuine apology solves the problem.
2. If bullying continues or it is serious, leaders should meet with the parent and child(ren) who is/are being bullied.
3. Leaders should also meet with the child(ren) who is bullying and their parent/s.
4. If serious, bullying should be reported to the Designated Person as a child protection issue.
5. Leaders should consider appropriate consequences for the bully and make sure these are carried through.
6. Keep the situation under review.

**::12.27 'WE CARE' RESOURCES**

The 'We Care' resources consist of a series of advice cards to help understanding and promote our Taking Care policy and practice. These are available for children, leaders and parents. A Taking Care poster is also available which should display the name of the Designated Person. All resources are available free of charge from the Taking Care Office. In this resources section you will find a copy of the wording of the 'We Care' resources range.

**'We Care 4 U!' – A pocket-sized guide for Children**

A pocket-sized card encouraging children to talk to an adult about any concern that they may have. This unique initiative has been approved by the Children's Law Centre, NSPCC and the Children's Commissioner. It has been sponsored by the Presbyterian Orphan and Children's Society.

**'We Care 4 U Too!' - A Leader's Guide**

This pocket-sized accordion style leaflet provides advice and information based on the Taking Care guidelines. It also has relevant contact phone numbers. It is essential for every leader and helper working with children and young people in all Presbyterian congregations to have one of these. It is sponsored by Oval James.

**'We Care With U' – A Parent's Guide**

This pocket-sized leaflet has been designed specifically for parents and carers of children. The leaflet informs parents of the Church's child protection policy and reminds them of how they can help leaders to protect children. Kindly sponsored by the Presbyterian Orphan and Children's Society.

**Taking Care Poster**

A3 poster with a space provided for the name and telephone number of the congregation's Designated Person.



**::12.28 RECOMMENDED READING**

- Time for Action – Sexual Abuse, the churches and a new dawn for survivors, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, 2002.
- Policing Innocence, Rebecca Andrews, 2008.
- When Child Abuse comes to Church, Bill Anderson 1992.
- Releasing The Scream, Rebecca Newman, 1994.
- Our Duty to Care – Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People, Volunteer Development Agency, 4th Edition 2007.
- Virtual Integrity – Faithfully Navigating the Brave New Web, Daniel J Lohrman, 2008.
- From Despair to Hope, Council on Social Responsibility Methodist Church in Ireland, 2002.
- Policy and Procedures for dealing with Complaints of Sexual Harassment, Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 2004.
- Policy and Procedures for dealing with Complaints of Abuse, Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 2004.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children, DCSF, March 2010.
- Remembering God's Love, A Service of Holy Communion, Causeway Prospects.

**::12.29 USEFUL LINKS (GENERAL)****Access Northern Ireland**

[www.dojni.gov.uk/accessni](http://www.dojni.gov.uk/accessni)

**Behaviour Management**

[www.parenting-ed.org](http://www.parenting-ed.org)

**Board of Christian Training**

[www.presbyterianireland.org/boards/christiantraining](http://www.presbyterianireland.org/boards/christiantraining)

**Board of Social Witness**

[www.pcibsw.org](http://www.pcibsw.org)

**Board of Youth and Children's Ministry**

[www.pciyouth.org](http://www.pciyouth.org)

**Booster Seat Legislation**

[www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk/advice/seatbelts.htm](http://www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk/advice/seatbelts.htm)

**Bullying**

[www.beatbullying.org](http://www.beatbullying.org)

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

[www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

**Child Abuse**

[www.ispcc.ie](http://www.ispcc.ie)

[www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

**Child Sexual Abuse**

[www.stopitnow.org.uk](http://www.stopitnow.org.uk)

**Children's Rights**

[www.niccy.org](http://www.niccy.org)

**Counselling**

[www.contactyouth.org](http://www.contactyouth.org)

[www.hse-ncs.ie](http://www.hse-ncs.ie)

[www.pcibsw.org](http://www.pcibsw.org)

**Data Protection**

[www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)

**Domestic Violence**

[www.womensaidni.org](http://www.womensaidni.org)

**First Aid**

[www.redcross.org.uk](http://www.redcross.org.uk)

[www.sja.org.uk](http://www.sja.org.uk)

**Health and Safety at work**

[www.peninsula-uk.com](http://www.peninsula-uk.com)

**Health and Safety Executive**

[www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

**Homelessness**

[www.simoncommunity.org](http://www.simoncommunity.org)

**Information on legislation, statistics and news**

[www.childlink.co.uk](http://www.childlink.co.uk)

[www.childlink.ie](http://www.childlink.ie)

**Independent Safeguarding Authority**

[www.isa.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.isa.homeoffice.gov.uk)

**Insurance**

[www.ecclesiastical.com](http://www.ecclesiastical.com)

[www.theovalgroup.com](http://www.theovalgroup.com)

**Internet Safety**

[www.ceop.gov.uk](http://www.ceop.gov.uk)

[www.iwf.org.uk](http://www.iwf.org.uk)

[www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

[www.webwise.ie](http://www.webwise.ie)

**Mental Health**

[www.niamh.co.uk](http://www.niamh.co.uk)

[www.thesite.org/healthandwellbeing/mentalhealth](http://www.thesite.org/healthandwellbeing/mentalhealth)

**Mobile Safety**

[www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

**National Youth Council Ireland**

[www.youth.ie](http://www.youth.ie)

**Road Safety**

[www.rospa.com](http://www.rospa.com)

[www.rsa.ie](http://www.rsa.ie)

**Self-harm**

[www.nshn.co.uk](http://www.nshn.co.uk)

[www.self-injury.org](http://www.self-injury.org)

**Sexual Abuse (adults)**

[www.nexusinstitute.org](http://www.nexusinstitute.org)

**Substance Abuse**

[www.contactyouth.org](http://www.contactyouth.org)

[www.fasaonline.org](http://www.fasaonline.org)

**Suicide**

[www.lighthouseireland.org](http://www.lighthouseireland.org)

[www.pipsprogrammes.com](http://www.pipsprogrammes.com)

**Trauma**

[www.journeytowardshealing.org](http://www.journeytowardshealing.org)

**Vulnerable Adults**

[www.nhs.uk/CarersDirect/guide/vulnerable-people/Pages/vulnerable-adults.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/CarersDirect/guide/vulnerable-people/Pages/vulnerable-adults.aspx)

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/adultawpublic.pdf](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/adultawpublic.pdf)

**::12.30 USEFUL LINKS (SPECIAL NEEDS)****General**

[www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk)  
[www.disabilityaction.org](http://www.disabilityaction.org)  
[www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk](http://www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk)  
[www.prospects.org.uk](http://www.prospects.org.uk)  
[www.throughtheroof.org](http://www.throughtheroof.org)

**Allergies**

[www.allergyni.co.uk](http://www.allergyni.co.uk)  
[www.epipen.co.uk](http://www.epipen.co.uk)  
[www.kidsallergies.co.uk](http://www.kidsallergies.co.uk)

**Asthma**

[www.asthma.org.uk](http://www.asthma.org.uk)

**Asperger's Syndrome**

[www.nas.org.uk](http://www.nas.org.uk)  
[www.aspenj.org](http://www.aspenj.org)

**Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)**

[www.addnet.uk](http://www.addnet.uk)

**Autism**

[www.autism.org](http://www.autism.org)  
[www.nas.org.uk](http://www.nas.org.uk)

**Cerebral Palsy**

[www.kidshealth.org/kid/health\\_problems](http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/health_problems)  
[www.ninds.nih.gov/health](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/health)

**Crohns & Ulcerative Colitis**

[www.crohns.org.uk](http://www.crohns.org.uk)

**Diabetes**

[www.diabetes.org.uk](http://www.diabetes.org.uk)

**Down's Syndrome**

[www.downs-syndrome.org.uk](http://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk)  
[www.sdsa.org.uk](http://www.sdsa.org.uk)

**Dyslexia**

[www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk](http://www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk)  
[www.dyslexia-inst.org.uk](http://www.dyslexia-inst.org.uk)

**Dyspraxia**

[www.emmbrook.demon.co.uk/dysprax/homepage.htm](http://www.emmbrook.demon.co.uk/dysprax/homepage.htm)

**Epilepsy**

[www.epilepsy.org.uk](http://www.epilepsy.org.uk)  
[www.epilepsynse.org.uk](http://www.epilepsynse.org.uk)

**Expressive Language Difficulties**

[www.afasic.org.uk](http://www.afasic.org.uk)  
[www.ican.org.uk](http://www.ican.org.uk)  
[www.hanen.org.uk](http://www.hanen.org.uk)  
[www.specialed.about.com](http://www.specialed.about.com)

**Hearing Impairment**

[www.batod.org.uk](http://www.batod.org.uk)

**Moderate Learning Difficulties**

[www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)

**Muscular Dystrophy**

[www.muscular-dystrophy.org](http://www.muscular-dystrophy.org)

**Visual Impairment**

[www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

**Wheelchair User**

[www.wheelchairnet.org](http://www.wheelchairnet.org)

## **::12.31 'WE CARE 4 U!' (CHILDREN'S GUIDE)**

### **Taking Care, Our Duty to Care**

As a Church we have a duty to care for you and keep you safe!

You must feel safe at all times!

You have a right to say NO to things you are not happy doing!

Say No to a stranger offering you things like sweets – a lift in a car – if they want to touch you!

If you are worried about anything tell someone you know!

Board of Social Witness **(028) 90417235**

NSPCC **0800 800 5000** [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk) [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

Childline **0800 1111** [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

ISPCC **(00353) 1 800 666 666** [ispcc@ispcc.ie](mailto:ispcc@ispcc.ie) [www.ispcc.ie](http://www.ispcc.ie)

**::12.32 'WE CARE 4 U TOO!' (LEADER'S GUIDE)****Physical Contact****It is Good Practice to:**

Ensure that you are not left alone with a child for long periods  
Remain visible to other leaders if you are talking to a child confidentially  
Offer comfort and reassurance to a child by placing a hand on their shoulder

**It is not Good Practice to:**

Rely on your reputation to protect you  
Make unnecessary contact with young people  
Spend excessive amounts of time alone with a child  
Take a child to your home without the child's parents and the leader knowing

**Never:**

Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games  
Allow inappropriate touching  
Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged  
Make sexually suggestive comments about, or to a child  
Let allegations go unclarified, unrecorded or unexplored with other leaders and the Designated Person  
Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves

**First Aid:**

Use a First Aider where possible  
Make immediate contact with parent/carer when necessary

**Control and Discipline****Always:**

Ask God for wisdom, discernment and understanding  
Pray for specific children or young people  
Work on each individual child's positive characteristics  
Be a good role model and set a good example  
Take care to give quieter and well behaved children attention  
Be consistent and work together as a team  
Ensure other leaders know what you have said – this avoids manipulation

**Never:**

Use force other than to defend a child/others from harm  
Discipline out of anger (but out of love)  
Use a "put down" with children/young people  
Humiliate a child/young person or belittle them in front of others  
Reject the child, just the behaviour  
Allow some children to take all your time and energy  
Compare children with each other



## Stamp Out Bullying

Bullying is wrong and should not be tolerated in our organisations

### Every Child Should:

- Know bullying is wrong
- Receive appropriate care if they are the victim or the bully
- Be encouraged to tell
- Be taught to respect all
- Receive a copy of 'We Care 4 U!'

### What to do if it happens:

- Bring the two parties together and help them decide on the best action to take
- Encourage the bully to say sorry
- If serious, talk to your Designated Person
- If the bully continues with the behaviour, consider suspension or exclusion
- If the incident is serious or bullying becomes persistent, tell the parents what has happened.

### Caution!

- Avoid posting photographs on the internet of individual children or young people
- Encourage children/young people to keep personal details private when using the internet
- Remember! A child/young person can be bullied through the use of mobile phones or internet

## Safety Check

- Is there adequate adult supervision?
- Is there written permission or parents/guardians for high risk activities?
- Are you aware of medication and allergy information?
- Are fire exits clear?
- Are young people supervised in the kitchen area?
- Are areas where maintenance work is taking place screened off?
- Is there an accident report book?
- Are there adequate ratios of leaders to children?

## Insurance

- Inform the church secretary well in advance of any hazardous activities
- Full list of 'high risk' activities are in the Taking Care guidelines
- Day trips, residential programmes and Church fêtes are covered automatically unless a high risk activity is involved

### Additional insurance may be required for:

- Bouncy castles
- Maintenance work
- Building projects
- Overseas projects

If in doubt seek advice!

**Concerned about a child?****DO:**

Stay calm  
Take the child seriously  
Listen to the child  
Reassure them they have done the right thing in telling  
Write down what was said to you  
Tell the leader in charge who will report to the Designated Person

**DON'T:**

Doing nothing is not an option  
Don't panic  
Don't make a child repeat the story unnecessarily  
Don't promise to keep secrets  
Don't enquire into details  
Don't deal with the problem alone

Remember! Doing nothing is not an option  
Refer to the Taking Care guidelines for more information and advice

**Transport**

Drivers with an 'R' plate should not be designated drivers on outings  
Ensure seatbelts are worn at all times and booster seats are used except in unforeseen circumstances  
Ensure there is adequate liability cover  
Avoid transporting a young person on their own  
If you have to transport a child by yourself make sure other leaders know what is happening and that the child is in the rear of the vehicle  
Make sure there is supervision in the rear of minibuses and coaches

**Get your ratios right!**

There should always be more than 1 leader  
Young leaders (i.e under 18) can be counted to make up ratios but should never be left alone with children

0-2 yrs=1 leader: 3 children  
2-3 yrs=1 leader: 4 children  
3-7 yrs=1 leader: 8 children  
Children aged 8 and over=2 leaders:20 children

Above ratios are for indoor activities. For outdoor activities and residential try to have 2 extra leaders.

## **::12.33 WE CARE WITH U! (PARENT'S GUIDE)**

### **Welcome!**

This Guide, for parents and carers, is to let you know what you can expect of those who will be looking after your child while at church organisation and how you, as a parent, can help us with that responsibility.

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland has a Child Protection programme called 'Taking Care'. Our aim is to create a safe environment for children, young people and leaders.

### **Child Protection Policy**

Every Presbyterian congregation should have a child protection policy and a policy statement should be visible on the church premises.

Taking Care Training is provided for everyone who works with children and young people and recommended every three years.

Every congregation should have at least one Designated Person for child protection through whom any concerns about a child should be discussed.

### **Recruitment Procedures**

All new leaders for regular positions must go through a recruitment process which includes references and a criminal records check.

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland is registered with Access Northern Ireland.

### **Good Advice**

Encourage leaders and give them your support. Remember they are mostly volunteers!

Get to know who is working with your child.

Why not offer to help when an extra pair of hands may be needed.

If you have any concerns or suggestions talk to a leader.

### **Parents**

#### **Your Child's Medication**

You have a responsibility to tell leaders about any medical conditions that your children have.

Remember to inform leaders if there has been a significant change to your child's medication.

If your child has any special needs, then talk to the leaders and tell them what is required!

#### **Consent Forms**

Parents please return consent forms as soon as possible! Let us know of any change in details e.g. new phone number.

#### **Rules**

For their safety, children should abide by the rules! Parents are encouraged to talk to leaders if they have any concerns.

## Leaders

Parental Consent and Data Protection

Leaders are responsible for making sure:

Consent forms are given to children in their organisation

Parents' contact details are not given out to other parties unless permission has been sought

They have parental consent if they are going to be taking photographs or video of children

### Leaders Should:

Never use force other than to defend a child

Never humiliate a child

Not tolerate bullying and inform parents if this is serious

REMEMBER! If a leader is concerned for a child's welfare they must contact the Designated Person for child protection within the congregation!

Leaders should accommodate children who have special needs within their group as much as they can.

### Emergency and First Aid:

If a child has been injured leaders will complete an accident form and tell parents.

All organisations should have a nominated person for First Aid and all leaders should act as a responsible parent would in the event of a child being hurt.

In an emergency parents are to be contacted.

### Also produced by Taking Care:

'We Care 4 U!' (Children's Guide)

'We Care 4 U Too!' (Leader's Guide)

### Useful Contacts

Stop It Now! **0808 1000 900**

NSPCC **0808 8005 000**

ISPC **(00353) 1800 666 666**

Parents Advice Centre **0808 8010 722** [www.parentsadvicecentre.org](http://www.parentsadvicecentre.org)

Childline **0800 1111**

Child Exploitation Online Protection [www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents)

Kindly Sponsored by The Presbyterian Orphan and Children's Society

Produced by the Taking Care Office **(028) 9041 7290**

[takingcare@presbyterianireland.org](mailto:takingcare@presbyterianireland.org)

[www.pcibsw.org/takingcare](http://www.pcibsw.org/takingcare)

### Out of Hours Helpline

(for Child Protection Advice)

**028 9041 7235** (if calling from Northern Ireland)

**048 9041 7235** (if calling from the Republic of Ireland)