

TAKING CARE

UPDATE



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Training for Designated Persons

During Autumn last year, ten training events for Designated Persons were held across Ireland. Many thanks to everyone who attended one of the evenings or the morning session - particularly those who travelled far. Also thanks to those who hosted the events, providing refreshments and, in one case, photocopying handouts as a lot more people turned up than was expected!

It was great to see familiar faces and meet others who are new to the role. It may be perceived as a daunting task for some, however, at the training it was emphasised that the Taking Care Office is available to them to answer questions and to give advice on incidents and issues. Our congregations are indebted to the work of the Designated Persons, much of what they do goes unnoticed and often they are not thought about 'until something goes wrong'. If you are a Designated Person and did not get to any of the Designated Person Training events held during 2015, then please sign up to either:

Tuesday 26th April in Assembly Buildings at 10:30am - 12:30pm
Monday 16th May Wellington PC at 7:30pm - 9:30pm

Please note: You must register for these events by contacting 90417290 or email takingcare@presbyterianireland.org

Editors' Welcome

(29th Edition)

Hello and welcome to the first Taking Care Update for 2016. Isn't it lovely to see the light in the morning and the yellow daffodils coming through! We are now reaping the benefits of a long winter! During the winter and indeed, all of last year, our new Taking Care Committee has been productive, busily working on policies and supporting our trainers programme and hopefully now we will see the benefits of their hard work.

Over the last few months we have seen a slight increase in the number of reports of allegations made against leaders. It is timely therefore, that the Taking Care committee has been updating the guidelines to include an Allegations Policy. I would encourage Designated Persons and Leaders in charge specifically to be familiar with this policy. It is explained on the back page of this issue and the full document is available to download from the website.

The website also has examples of completed Risk Assessment forms to help leaders in charge when putting them together for their own organisations and events. There is one for a Holiday Bible Club, a Youth Weekend and a Church Sleepover.

During 2015, 137 Taking Care Training sessions were delivered (29 Foundation; 98 Refresher training and 10 sessions for Designated Persons). As always, we are indebted to our trainers for the work that they do. If you have leaders who have missed out on training please see below for dates for Foundation training which is specifically for new leaders or the website which has a list of Refresher training events. This list is regularly updated as training is organised.

It is always great to read the positive comments and high praise for our training sessions. If anyone does have any concerns or complaints about the training please do contact me at the office.

Take Care,
Deborah Webster (Programme Co-ordinator)

Foundation Training

This training is for new leaders or those who have never attended Taking Care Training before. There is no need to register for these events.

All events will start at 7:30pm and finish at 9:30pm unless stated otherwise.

Regent Street, Newtownards
6th April

Donoughmore, Co. Donegal
14th April

Assembly Buildings, Belfast
19th April 10:30am

Downshire Road PC, Newry
20th April

Kirkpatrick Memorial PC, Belfast
21st April

Toberdoney PC, Ballymoney
25th April

3rd Rathfriland PC, Newry
25th April

Ardstraw PC, Omagh
27th April

2nd Randalstown PC, Antrim
28th April



To receive daily prayer points to help support both mission at home in Ireland and further afield sign up to PCI's prayer e-mail service. Every morning you will receive new prayer items to help www.presbyterianireland.org/prayer



Points for Prayer

- **Give thanks for all who attended the DP training.**

Give thanks for the commitment and hard work of all of the DPs. Pray that they will all have a better understanding of their role. Pray for wisdom and guidance as difficult issues are brought to them.

- **Pray for Trainers who will deliver the training specifically Foundation events during the month of April.**

- **Pray for the Taking Care Committee who will meet this month to discuss policy and training.**

NSPCC helpline - 0808 800 5000

The NSPCC has provided a free 24/7 multi-channel helpline in Northern Ireland. The helpline plays a crucial role in identifying children at risk by giving adults who are worried about a child a place that they can contact to share their concerns, anonymously if they wish, by phone, text or online. If a leader, parent or child is concerned about a child within the church context, the reporting process must be followed i.e. the leader in charge of the organisation is informed who will then report to the Designated Person or Minister. However, if a person is concerned about a child outside of the church setting

e.g. a neighbour's child or a relative, they are encouraged to contact the helpline.

The NSPCC works in partnership with statutory agencies to protect children. Of the total 986 contacts made to the helpline in 2014/15, 651 were referred to police or social services. The majority of contacts to the helpline 2014/2015 that resulted in a referral were from members of the public, 14% were from parent/carer and 10% from relatives.

Access NI - single certificate policy

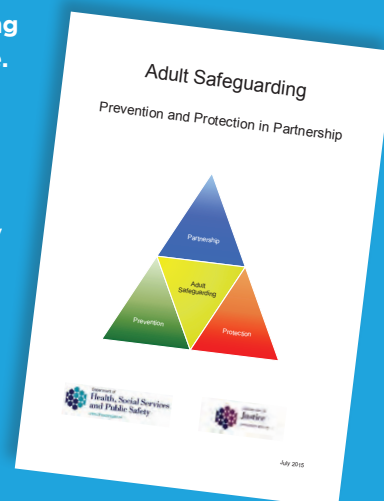
From 2nd November 2015, Access NI changed to a single certificate policy.

What this means is that the Taking Care Office no longer receives a copy of an applicant's Access NI certificate but instead we are informed that either there is nothing on a person's certificate or there is caution/conviction information on it. We are not told what the caution/conviction information is. Therefore, if a person's certificate has information on it, they will receive a letter from the Taking Care Office asking them to send the certificate to the office so we can advise the Minister acting on behalf of the Kirk Session, on an appointment decision. The Minister will also be sent a letter advising them that the person should not be appointed in post until an appointment letter has been issued. Applicants can be assured that any certificates handled at the office are done so sensitively and confidentially.

Safeguarding Adults

An Adult Safeguarding Task Group has been set up and has already met on three occasions so far. The remit of the group is to consider an Adult Safeguarding statement and an Adult Safeguarding policy for the Presbyterian Church in Ireland as well as a training programme for those within ministry who are working with adults who are vulnerable.

The church's new policy will be in line with the Adult Safeguarding - Prevention and Protection in Partnership policy which was issued in July 2015, by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Department of Justice.



Guidelines Update: Allegations Policy

What is an Allegations policy?

An Allegations policy states the procedure for dealing with allegations against staff or volunteers. The allegations might be made by or on behalf of a child or children.

Why is there a need for an Allegations policy within the Presbyterian Church in Ireland?

It is best practice that any organisation working with children and young people has a policy that deals with allegations.

Increasingly there are reports of allegations made against leaders within our organisations e.g. physical or verbal abuse against a child. It is important that these allegations are dealt with appropriately both for the safety of children and also the protection of the leader (some allegations turn out to be false or exaggerated).

When should the policy be used?

The policy should be used in any case where an allegation has been made against a member of staff or volunteer that they have:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
- or behaved towards a member of a child in a way that indicated he or she would pose a risk of harm if they work regularly or closely with children.

Who should use the policy?

The policy should be used by leaders, Ministers or Designated Persons as a guide to help them through an allegation.

Does the Allegations policy contradict with the Reporting process?

The allegations policy does not contradict with the reporting process but works in cooperation with it.

The policy states that, "If there is a child who is in immediate danger the priority must always be that they are protected and in a safe place. Therefore social services or police should be contacted immediately. Once a child is protected and in a safe place, it is important that the normal Reporting Process (as found in the Taking Care Guidelines) is also carried out. Equally if a child is not thought to be in any danger then the normal Reporting Process should be carried out.

Where can I read the policy?

The policy can be found on the Taking Care website in the resources section, www.presbyterianireland.org/takingcare. For a hardcopy please contact the office and it will be posted out to you.

