

04

Areas of Responsibility



TAKINGCARE

www.presbyterianireland.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.

::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**
