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Working Together



TAKINGCARE

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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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