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Health & Safety



TAKINGCARE

www.presbyterianireland.org/takingcare

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)

::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.

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.

::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.

::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.
