**Interim guidance for those planning to undertake
1:1 mentoring with young people**

**Background**

To date the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) has not supported 1:1 mentoring of children/young people in an attempt to safeguard both them and leaders. This is borne out generally in the Taking Care guidance section 7.2, stating that, within children’s/youth activities:

*“there should be a minimum of at least 2 leaders/helpers present at all times”.*

However, aware of the difficulties in ministering to groups of young people during the current circumstances of Covid-19, PCI is issuing this interim guidance for churches wishing to develop 1:1 mentoring in as safe a manner as possible.

**Taking care in mentoring**

1:1 situations have the potential to make the child/young person more vulnerable to harm by those who seek to exploit their position of trust. The fundamental principle, both in law and good practice, is that whenever the interests of young people are involved, their welfare must always be paramount.

Adults working in these situations with children/young people may also be more vulnerable to unjust or unfounded allegations being made against them. Both possibilities should be recognised so that reasonable and sensible precautions are taken.

This guidance provides a list of what churches **must do** and guidance on **good practice** in relation to 1:1 mentoring.

**Must do’s**

There are certain things that ***must*** be adhered to prior to, and during, mentoring.

* Recruitment

The recruitment of mentors should be in line with the Taking Care guidance of leaders generally.

[Application Form for Leaders - NI](https://www.presbyterianireland.org/getmedia/7df62f29-e605-4e4a-951f-58da50494369/AFL_08-app-form-Leaders-AUG-2019.pdf.aspx)

[Application Form for Leaders - RoI](https://www.presbyterianireland.org/getmedia/a719d281-c726-4853-b9f5-b7baca489d03/App-Form-AFLGV-03-Leaders.pdf.aspx)

Recruitment should include gaining references **prior to** mentoring.

[Referees](https://www.presbyterianireland.org/getmedia/ddd4182b-e9fc-4a8f-abd7-c4050c8682b8/Taking-Care-Two-Section-05.pdf.aspx)

[Reference Request Form](https://www.presbyterianireland.org/getmedia/5b2173bb-128b-4218-9307-9ef06a69c3e3/reference_request_form.pdf.aspx)

* Access NI/Garda Vetting Checks

The mentor must have received an Access NI/Garda Vetting disclosure certificate prior to mentoring.

Access NI have emphasised that the use of on-line streaming to deliver teaching, training, instruction, etc. to children is regarded as ‘Regulated Activity’ if it is carried out frequently (once per week or 4+ times in a 30 day period) and, as such, an ‘Enhanced disclosure’ with a check of the children’s barred list should be sought.

At the time of writing this guidance, the turnaround time for the processing of both Access NI and Garda vetting applications is between 2 and 4 days.

[Access NI Applicant Guide for Leaders](https://www.presbyterianireland.org/getmedia/e948e5c1-e670-4652-bf2c-a7995ad2a814/Application-process-for-Leaders-Aug2019.pdf.aspx)

[Garda Vetting Process - RoI](https://www.presbyterianireland.org/getmedia/36589ed4-b09c-49cd-ad36-1ca6f65c4305/Garda-Vetting-Process-Applicant.pdf.aspx)

* Training

The mentor must have received the Taking Care training through PCI.

* Consent

Parental/guardian consent must be sought and received. For this to qualify as informed consent information as to the aims, conditions and frequency of meetings must be provided.

A sample parental consent form for mentoring can be found at the end of this guidance.

* Venue

If mentoring takes place in person, meetings should avoid remote, secluded, areas. Instead, it should happen in a public place where other people are always present. While this safeguard might reduce the risk of a child/young person being physically or sexually harmed, it does not eliminate the risk of grooming.

If digital mentoring takes place parents/guardians should be made aware of how this will take place. See PCI Guidance: [Social media and video conferencing with children and young people](https://www.presbyterianireland.org/getmedia/af89580d-5693-45ac-b0ae-cb8ad1a7875d/Guidelines-for-social-media.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf).

* Confidentiality

Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed to those being mentored and any disclosures or suspicions of abuse should be dealt with by following the PCI child protection policy and procedures. Clarify this with the mentee early on. If you have to pass on information tell them when and to whom.

These basic conditions must be in place before setting up a mentoring scheme. If a programme has already commenced, we recommend that any areas above not already in place be addressed immediately.

**Good practice**

The following is guidance represents good practice in mentoring ministry.

* A minimum age of mentee should be agreed. It is advisable that this is not below the age of 14.
* A maximum length of each session and number of sessions should be decided and communicated to the young person and their parents.
* The mentor should record *who* they are meeting*, when* and *where.*
* Be clear about:
* The purpose of mentoring
* What your objectives are
* What particular qualities, skills and knowledge are needed to undertake the role of mentor
* What additional training is required in addition to safeguarding training
* How mentors will be supported, supervised to protect from being isolated and/or overwhelmed when undertaking mentoring
* The young person’s confidentiality and privacy, ensuring the young person is aware of the limits to confidentiality
* Having clear boundaries and a code of conduct for mentoring [Code of Conduct](https://www.presbyterianireland.org/getmedia/0f65e324-cb03-4f86-b6d8-7ba162f47fe6/code_conduct.pdf.aspx) – (Can be adapted for mentoring)
* The time limit of each session (1 hour is a recommended period)
* How you will keep connected with parents/guardians
* How the content of each session will be recorded
* The role of a co-ordinator who links mentors to mentees and is aware of where and when sessions are happening
* Who the mentee should speak to if they have any concerns regarding their mentor
* Maximising opportunities to be regularly in touch with parents/carers to ensure they are well-informed about the mentoring programme.
* For mentoring via digital means:
* Identify a suitable environment for the call.
* Be conscious of the need to take steps to ensure confidentiality when communicating online. See PCI Guidance: [Social media and video conferencing with children and young people](https://www.presbyterianireland.org/getmedia/af89580d-5693-45ac-b0ae-cb8ad1a7875d/Guidelines-for-social-media.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf).

A sample checklist is provided below.

**Mentoring 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.

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| Name of Congregation: |
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*I give permission for my child to attend mentoring sessions with a nominated mentor, on the basis that I know who my child’s mentor will be, how often they will meet and where/how this will take place.*

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| --- | --- |
| Child’s full name:  | DoB: |
| Name by which he/she is usually known: |
| Address: |
| Name of Parent to be contacted: |
| 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 mentors to know about: |

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

*I will inform the mentor 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 his/her mentor, 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.

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

**Checklist for mentoring**

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| Robust recruitment practice followed for mentor |  |
| Access NI/Garda vetting checks completed |  |
| Informed written parental consent gained |  |
| Code of conduct in place and followed |  |
| Venue will be open public space |  |
| Mentor will have necessary training in mentoring young people, including necessary skills and qualities |  |
| Mentor will be trained in safeguarding |  |
| A record of each session will be kept |  |
| There will be communication with parents/carers |  |
| A mentoring co-ordinator will allocate mentors to mentees |  |
| Concerns to be reported immediately to Designated Person |  |