

DAMASK Child Protection Policy

Creating a safe environment for children, young people, leaders, volunteers and staff

Damask Community Outreach in partnership with Seymour Street Methodist Church, Lisburn, reaches out to children and young people throughout the Community and welcomes those from households where there is no Methodist or other denominational connection. We have a legal duty of care to look after *all* children and provide a safe environment for them as best we can.

Parents/carers expect Damask and the church to have and enforce a child protection policy.

This policy is aimed at creating an environment where children and young people may enjoy social contact, personal and spiritual development and where they and the leaders and volunteers working with them will be kept safe.

Adoption of Methodist Church in Ireland Child Protection Guidelines

The Damask Community Outreach Board has adopted the Methodist Church in Ireland's Child Protection Guidelines, Taking Care, approved by the Conference and revised in 2011 (See full text below). All organisations must adhere to these guidelines as agreed by the Conference. The Damask Board will review the policy every three years and keep Taking Care on the agenda of the Damask Community Outreach Board meetings.

1. Leadership

The Damask Board believes that the recruitment and appointment process outlined in the Taking Care guidelines greatly assist the assessment of a person's suitability to work with children and young people. As a result of implementing such procedures, leaders and volunteers within Damask will be more assured of their position and of the confidence placed in them by the Damask Board.

The following procedures must be followed for the appointment of leaders who will be 18 years and over:

- 1) All leaders will be required to complete an application form for Leaders.
- 2) The application form includes the vetting process according to legislation and good practice.
- 3) The Damask Board will appoint up to two interviewers to meet informally with the applicant. At the interview the child protection policy will be provided and explained. The Taking Care Leader's Guide will also be provided.
- 4) Applicants will be required to provide two references by persons who are not relatives.

2. Training

Leaders and volunteers who work with children and young people should attend Taking Care Training on a regular basis (as Damask policy or legislation demands). Even those who have a good knowledge of child protection issues in another field should attend Taking Care Training.

Reporting of Concerns

The leaders in each of our organisations will be fully conversant with the reporting procedure where there is a concern about the welfare of a child, as outlined in the Taking Care Guidelines. Leaders must not hesitate to report a concern about a child if they are at any time worried about their welfare.

3. The Designated Person

The Damask Board has appointed the following Designated Person(s):-

Mr Steve Gray with Mrs Deborah Kinghan as Deputy Designated Person

The Designated Person(s) will give advice and support to organisations and to the Damask Board on matters concerning the welfare of children and young people. The Damask Board will keep organisational leaders updated with the name of the Designated Person(s). Any matter brought to the attention of the Designated Person will be treated in strict confidence. Information will be divulged only where there is a legitimate need to know.

4. Parental Consent Forms

Organisational leaders must ensure that they have home contact numbers, parental consent and medical information regarding the children in the organisations which they are working with. Special consent forms will be issued for any 'off the premises' activity and residential programmes.

5. Good Standards of Practice

Each organisation will be expected to comply with good standards of practice as outlined in the Taking Care Guidelines. This includes: physical contact, recommended ratios, transport, residential programmes and outings, sleepovers, photographs and working with children who have special needs.

6. Working Together

It is important that all leaders know the boundaries and rules of an organisation and that these are explained to children and parents. A code of conduct for children and young people will be drawn up at the commencement of the year's activities in each organisation. 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 volunteers.

All leaders must abide by the discipline guidelines as set out in the Taking Care manual.

7. Technology

Leaders should limit the direct Internet communication they have with individual children and young people in the organisation of which they are leaders. All such communication with children and young people should, as far as possible, be within an open forum; in order to protect both young people and leaders. Leaders should be wise as to how they use this form of communication.

Leaders should not post photographs of young people from the organisation in which they are leaders, on a social networking site or anywhere on the Internet, unless they have written parental consent.

Leaders should only have children's mobile numbers if the nature of their involvement requires them to phone or text children and if this is the case, contacting children through the use of mobile phones should be done in line with the Taking Care guidelines.

8. Health and Safety

The Damask Board expects organisations to adhere to the guidance on health and safety matters outlined in the Taking Care guidelines. A Risk Assessment form should be completed for each organisation as well as for any outings or occasional events. Leaders will be informed of fire and first aid procedures.

9. Implementation and Review

The Damask Board is responsible for overseeing the implementation of this policy and will review it every three years.

TAKING CARE

Child protection programme of the Methodist Church in Ireland

Revised 2011

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION 1.1

Taking Care is the name of the child protection programme of the Methodist Church in Ireland. Our aim is to create and promote a safe environment for children, young people, leaders and staff. We have a legal duty of care to look after the children who attend our activities and provide a safe environment for them as best we can.

This manual provides guidance to all involved in youth and children's work and ministry within the Methodist Church in Ireland to help ensure that children and young people enjoy their activities with optimum physical safety and are free from the threat of abuse. It will also alert leaders to signs of distress which may indicate that a child has been mistreated.

Each Church Council/Circuit Executive should appoint a Designated Person for Child Protection, follow the Recruitment and Appointment Process for new leaders which includes the vetting process according to legislation, make sure all leaders attend child protection training and are fully aware of the reporting process in case a child protection concern or incident were to arise.

By adopting and using these guidelines each congregation will be raising the standard of care for those entrusted to them, no matter how brief the event or small the organisation they attend. The Methodist Church in Ireland reaches out to children and young people throughout the island of Ireland and welcomes those from households where there is no Methodist or other denominational connection.

Every congregation in the Methodist Church in Ireland must have adopted these guidelines and should be implementing them in all its organisations which work with children and young people according to the Conference.

WHY DOES THE CHURCH NEED GUIDELINES? 1.2

There are four main reasons why we need to have a child protection policy within the church:

1. A Legal Requirement

The law rightly requires us to have guidelines in place and says we have a duty of care to children and young people that we work with. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates that “children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence. They must be kept safe from harm. They must be given proper care by those looking after them”¹

Five Key Principles of Child Care

The Children (NI) Order 1995 and the Child Care Act (RoI) 1991 emphasise the following key principles:

Paramountcy – It is a fundamental principle in child care law and practice that the welfare of the child must be the paramount consideration in decisions taken about him/her.

Parental Responsibility – Parents have a responsibility to children rather than rights over them. There may be situations where other significant adults share this responsibility with one or both parents.

Prevention – We should aim to prevent situations arising where children are separated from their families. The state should provide support and services to keep children within their families and communities, in order to promote their health and welfare.

Partnership – The most effective way of ensuring that a child’s needs are met is by working in partnership. The provision of services must therefore take into account the views of parents.

Protection – Children should be safe and should be protected by intervention if they are in danger.

2. Biblical Basis

As well as a legal imperative, there is also a Biblical one. We have our own duty of care found in the Bible. 1 Peter chapter 5 verse 2 says, “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be”. Next to proclaiming God’s Word and the love of Christ, what could be more important than keeping our children safe?

3. Our own Protection

Taking Care is not only there to protect children and young people but leaders too and ultimately the organisations of the church as a body. Sometimes leaders may think that aspects of the guidelines are not necessary, however it should be remembered that it is for their own protection and they should not rely on their reputation to protect them.

By having the guidelines in place leaders and helpers will be more assured of their own protection in the event of false allegations.

¹ The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

4. The world that we live in

No denomination is immune from the problem of trusted adults misusing their position. This requires a response which is both aimed at prevention and care for those who may have been mistreated. We must not be naive to the fact that there are people in the world today who want to harm children and so we as a church must do all that we can to protect our children, promote good practice and prevent abuse.

CLARIFICATION OF TERMS 1.3

A **child** is a person under 18 years old. Where either children or young people are mentioned in the Guidelines, both are intended.

A **leader** is anyone 18 years old or over who is engaged in work or voluntary activity which involves regular contact with children or young persons.

A **young leader** or **helper** is a person aged between 15 and 18 years old who assists in organisations working with children.

A leader in a **regulated position** is an adult working either as a volunteer or in a paid position, teaching, training, instructing, care or supervision of children, carried out by the same person frequently (once a week or more often), or on 4 or more days in a 30-day period, or overnight.

A **vulnerable adult** is anyone aged 18 or over who cannot take care of themselves. This may be because they have a mental health problem, a disability, visual or hearing problems, are old and frail, or are ill.

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY 1.4

Every congregation in the Methodist Church should have a child protection policy in place which is based on the Taking Care Guidelines. The child protection policy should relate to all children and youth organisations within the Church. A child protection policy statement should be displayed clearly on church premises. A sample policy statement is found in Section 12. This brief policy statement should be developed to suit the congregation's individual needs and formally adopted by the Church Council/Circuit Executive. Each leader should be given a copy of the congregation's child protection policy and be in agreement with it.

ABUSE

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE? 2.1

There are many reasons that a perpetrator abuses children. Whatever the reason, abuse is always wrong, and *it is never the child's fault*.

It is very important that abuse is stopped as soon as it is discovered for the sake of both the victim and the abuser. The sooner you take action, the more likely it is that the abuse will stop and that the child will recover from his or her experiences.

It is not only adults who abuse children. Teenage abuse is a growing concern; this is when older children abuse younger children or their peers, acknowledging that the majority of abusers are known to their victims.

Child abuse does not refer solely to sexual abuse; there are four main types of child abuse. The following definitions of abuse include some of the signs which can act as clues to tell us that abuse has taken place. This list is by no means conclusive nor does it mean that if a child shows one or more of the signs they have definitely been abused.

Physical Abuse occurs when an adult or other young person hurts, kicks, beats or punches a child.

Signs may include:

- Unexplained recurrent injuries or burns;
- Improbable excuses or refusal to explain injuries;
- Self-destructive tendencies;
- Fear of physical contact, a shrinking back if touched.

Neglect occurs when an adult leaves a child alone, does not give them enough to eat or does not take them to the doctor when they are ill.

Signs may include:

- Constant hunger;
- Inadequate clothing;
- Constant tiredness;
- Poor personal hygiene.

Emotional Abuse may occur when a person communicates nasty things to a child either spoken or communicated by other means such as texting or email. Emotional abuse can also occur when an adult caring for a child doesn't have appropriate physical contact with them.

Signs may include:

- Delays in physical, mental and emotional development;
- Continual belittling of oneself;
- Over-reaction to mistakes;
- Extreme fear of any new situation;
- Inappropriate response to pain;
- Neurotic behaviour.

Sexual Abuse occurs when an adult or other young person interacts with a child in an inappropriate and sexual manner. This can include touching the child's private parts, asking the child to touch parts of the abusers' body or showing the child sexually explicit images or videos. All this may make the child feel worried or unhappy – though the fact that the child is not worried or unhappy does not mean that abuse is not taking place.

Signs may include:

- Sexual Knowledge, including drawing sexually explicit pictures, or use of language inappropriate for the child's age;
- Being over affectionate in a sexual way that is inappropriate to the child's age;
- Regression to younger behavioural patterns such as thumb sucking;
- Self-mutilation, suicide attempts, running away, overdosing, anorexia;
- Sudden loss of appetite or compulsive eating.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE 2.2

Young people attending church organisation are also at risk of being exposed to substance abuse. This can range from smoking to experimenting with solvents, alcohol and drugs. It is important that leaders are aware of the danger signs and include awareness training in their programme planning for high risk groups. For contact details of useful organisations in this field see Section 12.

DOMESTIC ABUSE AND CHILDREN 2.3

Violence against women and men in the home is a serious crime, which causes enormous health and social problems and emotional and psychological damage, not only to the victims, but also to their children. Children are often witnesses and are necessarily affected by the anxiety and personal threat to themselves. Domestic violence is the most common form of interpersonal crime and also the least reported.

Leaders should be aware that children may not only overhear or observe violence in the home, but may become direct victims, either accidentally or deliberately.

The social pressures to remain within a violent home and the stigma which parents perceive in relation to living in refuges or temporary accommodation as single parents should not be underestimated. It is important for leaders of church organisations to be aware that agencies such as Police/ An Garda Síochána and Health & Social Care Trusts have developed policies to help in situations of domestic violence and that advice, support and help are available from the Women's Aid Federation (NI & RoI). Men experiencing domestic violence may also have to seek refuge; accommodation may be available in the Simon Community (NI & RoI).

The impact of domestic violence on children can lead to physical, psychological and behavioural disorders and may subsequently affect them when they become parents. Many of these concerns will have a pastoral response from the church.

BULLYING 2.4

All kinds of bullying are wrong and should not be tolerated within organisations of the Methodist Church in Ireland. Our organisations should be a safe and welcoming place for all children. All organisations should develop a culture of openness where children and leaders feel able to say if they or their friends are being bullied.

What is bullying?

The government defines bullying as; *"Deliberately hurtful behaviour repeated often over a period of time"*² Bullying can happen anywhere to anyone; anyone has the potential to bully others.

What forms does it take?

Bullying can be name calling or teasing. Bullying is often physical; victims are pushed, punched, kicked and hit. Victims can be forced to do things they don't want to do or are left out of games or ignored by others. Cyber bullying is when bullies contact their victims via text messaging or the Internet. This often intensifies the bullying as victims have little escape from their bullies.

Preventative Measures

All leaders should try to prevent bullying within their organisation. However, if it does happen, leaders must deal with it and not ignore it. All organisations are encouraged to write an anti-bullying policy based on these guidelines to suit their own needs (a sample policy is available in section 12). Children and young people should be a part of that process.

² http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Yourchildshealthandsafety/WorriedAbout/DG_10015786

If children are new to the group or spend a lot of time on their own, leaders should encourage others to befriend them. Having friends is one of the best defences against bullying. Leaders should always reward and acknowledge positive behaviour, especially young people who befriend others or prevent or stop bullying. Bullying should be discussed openly within the group and young people should be regularly encouraged to talk to the leaders about anything that is bothering them.

How to deal with bullying

- Talk to the victim(s) and find out what has happened. Reassure them that it is not their fault and they have made the right decision in telling you. Make sure they are supported throughout the process.
- Meet with those involved. It might be suitable to discuss the issue with all members of the group, not just those who are bullying. It is not necessary to mention the victim by name. Talk about how they would feel if they were being left out/called names etc.
- Discuss how the situation could be improved: - if bullying is happening how it can be stopped and how everyone can feel happier in the group. Make sure everyone within the group is adhering to the code of conduct or anti-bullying policy. Once everyone has agreed that bullying should not take place, agree what the consequences should be if it were to continue.
- If the bullying continues, make sure the agreed consequences are carried out.
- If the bullying is serious, report it to the Designated Person and to parents.
- Ensure that adequate support is in place for the one who has been doing the bullying and all attempts have been made for them to be discouraged from repeating this behaviour.
- Keep the situation under constant review.

SELF-HARM 2.5

Increasingly people who work with children and young people are being faced with the issue of self-harm. It is difficult to define and to understand why someone would want to harm themselves. In very basic terms it is the inflicting of physical pain to mask an emotional imbalance.

In 2004 the Royal college of Psychiatrists observed: "Deliberate self-harm is a term used when someone injures or harms themselves on purpose. Common examples include 'overdosing' (self-poisoning), hitting, cutting, or burning oneself, pulling hair, or picking skin, or self-strangulation. It can also include taking illegal drugs and excessive amounts of alcohol.

Self-harm is always a sign of something being seriously wrong.”³ Disclosure of any self-harm should never be ignored; it is a clear sign that someone needs help and that self-esteem is low. Care should always be taken in how this problem is managed and advice should be sought at all times.

For contact details of useful organisations in this field see Section 12

RESPONDING, REPORTING AND RECORDING

RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS/ ACCIDENTS/CONCERNS 3.1

Responding to incidents and accidents

Many issues that are brought to leader’s attention are not necessarily a concern about a child’s welfare or allegation of abuse but they may be a minor problem, in other words, an incident or an accident. An example of an incident would be a male leader who takes a young girl home by himself without previous knowledge from or communication to parents/carers or other leaders. An example of an accident would be a teenager falling over in youth club and needing First Aid treatment. It is important that leaders know how to handle problems, no matter how minor, and that they are able to respond to more serious concerns.

Youth organisations should have copies of the Accident/Incident Report form to record details of accidents and incidences. These forms should be used for the recording of accidents, incidents, injuries and any action taken. Each entry should be signed by the leader in charge. Parents/guardians should be informed in person or by phone of the accident/incident as soon as possible.

See Section 12 for a sample Accident/Incident Report form.

Responding to Concerns

A concern about a child may refer to an incident when a child has shown signs of abuse or there has been a disclosure of abuse. A concern may also refer to inappropriate or difficult behaviour that an adult has shown towards a child.

Responding to concerns must be based upon a clearly defined reporting process. Knowing what to do, who to contact and who needs to know will ensure that the incident is dealt with appropriately. The primary responsibility is to report any concern as soon as possible and ensure that the concern is taken seriously.

³ Royal College of Psychiatrists Self Harm factsheet 26, 2004

If there is ever a concern that a child might be in danger then do not hesitate to contact Police/ An Garda Síochána immediately. In the event of a concern that involves alleged or suspected child abuse a Report of Concern Form must be completed and passed to the Designated Person or Minister who should be made aware of the situation as soon as possible.

What to do and what not to do if a child discloses to you:

Do

- Stay calm
- Listen
- Give time to the child to say what they want
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing in telling
- Write down what was said to you or what you observed as soon as possible
- Write down the exact words that the child used
- Use the Report of Concern form
- Ensure that the Designated Person is informed without delay
- In the event of a serious concern do not hesitate to contact the IMYCD Office and appropriate advice will be given

Don't

- Do not panic
- Do not make a child repeat the story unnecessarily
- Do not promise to keep secrets
- Do not investigate
- Under no circumstances should you attempt to deal with the problem alone

THE REPORTING PROCESS 3.2

Flowchart explaining the reporting process:



1. If a child is in danger or a criminal offence has taken place, then Police/ An Garda Síochána or social services must be informed immediately. Do not delay this by having a meeting. Remember that the task of deciding whether or not abuse has occurred rests with the professional agencies. If there is a DBS agreement on whether or not to refer a concern to a child protection agency, any individual, as a concerned citizen, can still make a referral.

2. The person who has the concern should tell the leader in charge.
3. The leader in charge should inform the Designated Person and/or Minister.
4. The Designated Person should meet with the Minister as soon as possible, consider all the information available and decide on whom, if anyone needs to be reported to. If for any reason it is not possible to speak to the Minister or if an allegation concerns a Minister or member of his/her family, the Designated Person should consult with the General Secretary of IMYCD as soon as possible.
5. All concerns, complaints and disclosures in a congregation, relating to child protection, must be reported to the IMYCD Office without delay. Appropriate advice and support will be given if requested.
6. Consideration should be given by the Minister to offering support to the leader or other person who made the initial report. Help and advice can be provided by contacting the IMYCD Office.
7. In the congregational context, information should be restricted to the Designated Person and Minister. Other leaders may be informed at a later stage in the process.

DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE 3.3

It is a legal requirement that the Methodist Church in Ireland must inform the Disclosure and Barring Service if they remove a person from volunteering or working in regulated activity with children or vulnerable adults.

According to the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007, a regulated activity provider, such as the Methodist Church, must refer to the DBS when they have withdrawn permission for a person to engage in regulated activity because they think that the person meets the following criteria:

- The person has received a caution/conviction for a relevant offence. This would be a serious offence that automatically bars a person from working with children or vulnerable adults. For example, the rape of a child.
- The person is suspected of being engaged in relevant conduct. Examples of relevant conduct include conduct which endangers a child or vulnerable adult or is likely to endanger them and conduct of a sexual nature involving a child. This conduct could be acts of omission or commission.
- The harm test is satisfied. The harm test is where it is thought that a person **may** harm a child or vulnerable adult, cause them to be harmed, or where a person has put a child/vulnerable adult at risk of harm, attempted to harm a child/vulnerable adult or

incited another to harm a child/vulnerable adult. For example, a volunteer confided in a minister that he had a sexual interest in children but had never acted upon this interest.

More information can be found on the Disclosure and Barring Service's website:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service>

The General Secretary of IMYCD will advise on this referral process and offer support to those involved. Referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service should be made through the IMYCD Office.

RECORDING 3.4

Child's Words

It is very important that any words that a child says are recorded accurately. If a child says something of concern to a leader, this should be recorded immediately on any piece of paper at hand and then the Report of Concern form written up at a later stage. It is advisable to retain the original piece of paper. Once completed, the Report of Concern form and original should be given to the Designated Person or Minister and kept confidentially.

Report of Concern Form

The person who has reported the concern should complete a Report of Concern Form which is available in section 12.

Try to have available the following information:

- The name and address of the child
- Age of the child
- The nature of any injury or complaint
- The need for medical attention (if any)
- What your concern actually is
- What course of action you have already taken (if any)
- Any other information you may have e.g. what school they attend, the name of their G.P

Record of Meeting Form

A record should be kept of any meetings held in relation to a child protection concern. It should be recorded what the concern was and whether or not the decision was taken to report to an outside agency. The Record of Meeting form can be used as a prompt (see section 12) and once completed should be kept confidentially in a safe place.

MANAGING OFFENDERS 3.5

The Methodist Church believes that within the context of grace and forgiveness, attendance at worship services is open to everyone. At the same time, the protection of our children must remain paramount at all times. A person who has cautions or convictions on their record may still be involved in the life and witness of the church. However if a person has convictions against children then they should never be able to be involved in a position of leadership with children. If a congregation is following the Taking Care guidelines by having all new leaders in regulated positions undergo the vetting procedure then any convictions will be known through this process (for more information on vetting, see section 5).

If it becomes known that a person who has been convicted of offences against children is attending church worship or any church organisations the IMYCD Office should be contacted. This is not to say they cannot attend but so that advice can be taken to ensure that attendance becomes safe for the protection of the children and others attending church and for the offender themselves. If an offender has restrictions placed upon them from Police/ An Garda Síochána or probation services, the church must work in partnership with these agencies.

DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS 3.6

If a young person or parent/carer has a general complaint about the running of an organisation, such complaints should be directed through the organisation leader to the Minister or the Church Council. The complainant should be assured that the matter will be dealt with in a prompt and appropriate manner. They should be informed as soon as possible of the decisions and the action, if any, that will be taken.

CONFIDENTIALITY 3.7

Who needs to know what?

It is always important that child protection issues are treated confidentially, only those who need to know about an incident or concern should be informed.

This will mean that where the Minister or Designated Person considers that a child is at risk of abuse, or that a criminal offence may have been committed, it should be reported to:

- The IMYCD Office
- Social Services or Police/ An Garda Síochána

Informing Parents

Depending on what the incident or concern about a child is, parents/carers may need to be informed. In certain circumstances Police/ An Garda Síochána or social services will advise, if they do not then contact the IMYCD Office for advice.

Alleged Perpetrator

If an allegation has been made against a leader, advice must be taken as to whether or not they should be informed.

REPORTING CONTACTS 3.8

Northern Ireland

Any abuse issues relating to children in Northern Ireland should be dealt with either by the police or social services.

Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI)

Within the PSNI, it is the Child Abuse investigation Units (CAIU) that deals with issues relating to children. They are part of the overarching Public Protection Unit; there is one CAIU in each of the 8 policing districts. They are made up of male and female detectives who work in plain clothes and are specially trained to investigate all alleged and suspected cases of child abuse. Contact the central number 0845 600 8000 or in the event of an emergency phone 999.

Health and Social Service Trusts

All reports of a child protection nature in Northern Ireland are either dealt with by PSNI or by a local Gateway Team located within the six Health and Social Service Trusts. Contact details for social services located within each trust can be found on the Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland website www.n-i.nhs.uk.

Republic of Ireland

Any abuse issues relating to children in the Republic of Ireland should be dealt with either by An Garda Síochána or by social workers.

An Garda Síochána

If a child is believed to be at immediate risk, contact An Garda Síochána at the appropriate Garda station, in case of emergency ring 999 or 112.

Health Service Executive

Any abuse issues relating to children in the Republic of Ireland should be dealt with by Garda Síochána or social workers. There is a Duty Social Worker located within the HSE Child and

Family Services Office. Offices are normally open 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Contact details for the 32 local health offices can be found on the HSE website www.hse.ie.

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

THE ROLE OF CHURCH COUNCIL 4.1

The Church Council 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 5.4).

Appoint a Designated Person

Every Circuit must appoint at least one Designated Person whose role is to co-ordinate the area of child protection within the circuit. 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 Church Council members. Some may need more help than others depending on the size of the circuit and the level of youth and children's activities (see section 4.2).

Oversee the Appointment of Leader's Process

It is the responsibility of Church Council 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 Church Council 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 IMYCD Office for help and advice.

Keep Child Protection on the Agenda

Church Council has the responsibility to appoint and oversee all new leaders so they need to be informed of each new appointment. It is Church Council's responsibility to be aware of child protection issues and concerns relevant to their congregation. That said, the whole of Church Council 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 Church Council is kept up to date, Child Protection should be an item on each Church Council meeting agenda. Even if there is nothing to report, it should be recorded that this is the case.

APPOINTMENT OF A DESIGNATED PERSON 4.2

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. 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 Church Council 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 Church Council 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 District should be sought.

The Designated Person should complete the Registration form for Designated Persons (available in section 12) before they are formally appointed.

THE ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED PERSON 4.3

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 confirm that leaders participate in Taking Care Training on a regular basis.
3. To oversee the Appointment Process for new leaders including co-ordinating the distribution of applications forms and making sure leaders are vetted where

appropriate and reference request forms are sent. Members of the Church Council, leaders in charge of organisations and administrative staff can help with this process.

4. To remain a point of contact with the IMYCD Office so that relevant information 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 Church Council 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 Church Council in his or her role.

THE ROLE OF THE IMYCD OFFICE 4.4

The main functions of the staff at the IMYCD Office are:

1. To offer support and advise to Ministers, Designated Persons, Leaders and Parents on Child Protection issues.
2. To provide Child Protection training.
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.
6. To work with PSNI/An Garda Síochána, social services and probation on behalf of a congregation where necessary.

Staff at the IMYCD Office will endeavour to 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 IMYCD will organise regular training sessions for each District.

Please contact the General Secretary at the IMYCD Office to discuss any issues or ask any questions to do with child protection.

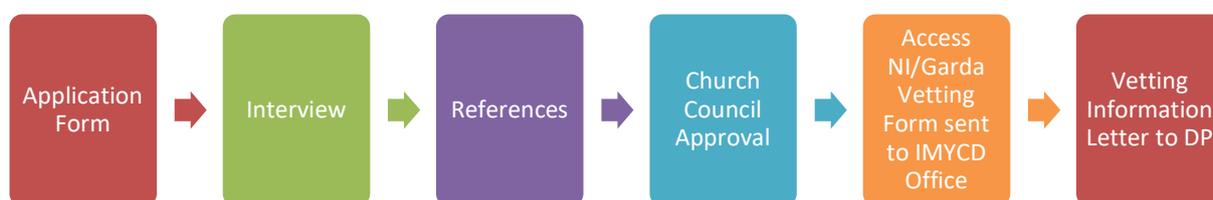
RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENT PROCESS, AND EMPLOYMENT OF WORKERS

THE RECRUITMENT AND APPOINTMENT PROCESS 5.1

It is necessary to have a recruitment and appointment policy in place to select leaders in order to provide a safe environment for children and young people. A proper appointment procedure is one of the most sensible and effective ways of assessing a person's suitability to work with children and young people, and may in itself act as a deterrent to potential abusers. This is often felt to be an unnecessary burden, particularly if the person is part-time, a volunteer and already known to the Minister or members of the congregation. However, the more routine the procedure becomes, the less intimidating it will be to all concerned. By having good standards of practice in our organisations, people are more likely to want to join. Increasingly parents want evidence of good recruitment.

Care needs to be taken to ensure that anyone who may be unsuitable for working with young people is not given the opportunity to become a leader. Furthermore it is important to ensure that everyone participates in a selection procedure, even if they are recognised as people of good standing.

The Appointment of Leaders Process



Application Form: An application form must be completed by everyone applying to work with children and young people in regulated positions. The application form includes the vetting

process according to legislation and good practice. Applicants will be asked to declare any past criminal convictions.

Interview: The organisational leader, along with, either, the Minister, Designated Person or a Church Council member, should meet the person and ensure that they have the ability and commitment required for the role. At the interview the Child Protection policy should be provided and explained and the leader should be given a copy of the pocket Leader's Guide.

Referees: The names of two referees should be given by the applicant. The referees should not be family members, the Minister, Designated Person or either of the interviewers. If the applicant is coming from a previous place of worship then a reference should be sought from their previous Minister. Otherwise, references should be from people who have had first-hand knowledge of their work with children/young people and have known the applicant for at least two years. It is usually the role of the Designated Person to send a Reference Request Form (see section 12) to the referees given. These, along with the application form, do **not** need to be sent to the IMYCD Office but should be kept for the congregation's own records.

Church Council Approval: All application forms must be signed by either the Minister or a member of Church Council to say that as far as the leaders are aware, the applicant is suitable for the role that they are applying for.

Form to be sent to IMYCD Office: The Access NI/Garda Vetting form must be sent to the IMYCD Office. It is at this stage that appropriate vetting will take place in line with current legislation and practice. The Designated Person, whose role it is to distribute forms and collect them before returning them to the IMYCD Office, must check the forms carefully to make sure they have been completed thoroughly.

Vetting Information Letter to Designated Person: Once the vetting process is complete, a letter will be sent from the IMYCD Office to the Designated Person of the congregation to notify them of the outcome. If the necessary clearance has been gained, the applicant can now be appointed. In N. Ireland the applicant will also receive a certificate directly from Access NI.

VETTING 5.2

General vetting principles

In order to comply with the law and good practice, all leaders taking up a regulated position to work with children and young people must be vetted. The process of vetting leaders involved a criminal records check which will show if an applicant has any criminal convictions.

The vetting process does take time and because of this, congregations are urged to recruit their leaders well in advance and allow for this time when planning events and organisations such as a Holiday Bible Club. Contact the IMYCD Office to find out how long forms are currently taking.

Please remember that vetting is only a part of the appointment process. Just because a person does not have a criminal record, does not mean that they are suitable to work with children. It simply means they have no criminal records.

A person who does have a criminal conviction will not necessarily be barred from working with children and young people within a church setting. Only convictions considered relevant will be taken into consideration when an appointment is made.

Please be assured that all certificates, forms and conviction information are treated sensitively and confidentially at the IMYCD Office.

Northern Ireland

New leaders (since April 2005) who are working in a regulated position with children and young people should complete the most recent application form for leaders which includes an Access Northern Ireland form.

Leaders on a rota basis for organisations such as Crèche or children's church for example, should only complete the application form if they meet the frequency test. I.e. four or more times a year.

The leader in charge of each organisation e.g. Sunday School Superintendent should also be vetted. Please check the IMYCD website or contact the office for the most up to date information.

Republic of Ireland

New leaders (since September 2006) who are working in a regulated position with children and young people should complete an application form for leaders which includes a Garda Vetting Form. As of March 2013, this is now a legal requirement.

Leaders on a rota basis for organisations such as Crèche or children's church for example, should only complete the application form if they meet the frequency test, i.e. four or more times a year.

The leader in charge of each organisation e.g. Sunday School Superintendent should also be vetted. Please check the IMYCD website or contact the office for the most up to date information.

Regulated Position

At the time of writing a regulated position is defined as:

An adult (i.e. a person 18 years old and over) working in direct contact with children (i.e. a person under 18 years old) either as a volunteer or in a paid position, providing teaching,

training, instructing, care or supervision of children, frequently (once a week or more often), or on 4 or more days in a 30-day period, or overnight.

TRAINING 5.3

The Importance of Training

As well as being appointed properly, it is important that leaders have adequate training to do the job required of them. It is the responsibility of Church Council not only to appoint leaders but to support them in their role; this includes providing appropriate opportunities for training. The Methodist Church in Ireland offers a variety of training resources through both, Edgehill College and IMYCD, as well as the Taking Care Programme. Edgehill College is responsible for the development of training courses and resources for church members as well as the theological training of ministers. IMYCD provides training in a variety of formats that equip youth and children's workers for leadership within the local church. MMS and Home Missions offer other training e.g. for those who are going on a short term team overseas or with their congregation, stewardship etc.

Child protection training is essential to *all* people who work with children and young people in all fields of life, within a professional and voluntary basis. Within the Methodist Church, the child protection training delivered at District level is called 'Taking Care'. It is essential that leaders and helpers within the Methodist Church attend Taking Care training as this is specific to the church's own policy.

Taking Care Training

Leaders and helpers who work with children and young people should attend Taking Care Training on a regular basis (refreshers are recommended every 3 years). This includes young leaders/helpers (for definition, see Section 1.3) as well as leaders on a rota basis for organisations such as crèche and children's church. Even though they may not be working with children every week, they should still attend training. Even those who have a good knowledge of child protection issues in another field should attend as Taking Care Training is the only training available that is specific to the policy of the Methodist Church.

It is recommended that the congregation keep a record of all training that has been undertaken and who has attended. IMYCD also keep this record and provide certificates to those who have attended. District training sessions are organised twice a year, usually in September/October and April/May.

Training for Ministers

Ministers should also attend Taking Care training sessions as they are involved closely in the reporting processes. It is vital that they know any changes in legislation and processes.

REGISTER OF ALL LEADERS 5.4

A register of all leaders working with children within a congregation should be kept and reviewed on an annual basis. This register should be a record of all leaders and helpers in all organisations under the auspices of Church Council, whether they have completed an application form or not, are on a rota basis or are under the age of 18. A register of all leaders is available in Section 12.

COMMON PROTOCOL 5.5

The Common Protocol is an agreed procedure for churches relating to independent organisations working with children and young people, regularly using church premises. The protocol has been agreed by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Church of Ireland, Methodist Church in Ireland *and* BB (NI), GB (NI), the Scouting Association and Girl Guiding Ulster. It also has application with any other Christian, sporting, arts or leisure groups using church premises. The protocol can be found in Section 12 or downloaded from the website where an information leaflet is also available.

General principles are set out below:

What does it do?

The Common Protocol clearly sets out the expectations and responsibilities of both the church and the independent organisation, particularly in the areas of child protection, appointment of leaders, information sharing and reporting of concerns of a child protection nature which may arise within an organisation.

Who should use it?

- Congregations whose premises are used by independent organisations (i.e. not under the auspices of Church Council).
- All independent organisations working with children and young people, and regularly using church premises.

What is an independent organisation?

The nature of the independence of children's and youth organisations varies. In Northern Ireland, Boys Brigade (NI) and Girls Brigade (NI) are integral to the congregations where they exist; the Scouting Association and Girlguiding Ulster are national young people's organisations and are fully independent. Boys Brigade and Girls Brigade in the Republic of Ireland are similar

to Guides and Scouts in NI. Sporting, arts or leisure groups may be affiliated to national networks or may be smaller stand-alone organisations. The Common Protocol has application for churches and organisations in all of these settings.

What the church is responsible for:

1. Recruiting, selecting and appointing (including vetting) all church based children's/youth leaders **including leaders for BB (NI) and GB (NI)**.⁴
2. Providing child protection training to all church based children's and youth leaders **and leaders for BB (NI) and GB (NI)**.
3. Supplying to the leader of the fully independent organisation the names and contact details of the church personnel who are responsible for the premises and the Designated Person for child protection in the congregation.
4. Ensuring that the Church Council Secretary signs annually, on behalf of the church, the Common Protocol with each fully independent organisation using church premises.
5. Ensuring the safety of the premises.

BB(NI) and GB(NI) companies should satisfy themselves of the extent of insurance cover provided for their activities within their organisation's annual capitation.

What a fully independent organisation is responsible for:

1. Recruiting, selecting and appointing (including vetting) leaders/ workers in their organisations.
2. Providing child protection training to the leaders/ workers of their organisation.
3. Providing annually to the congregation the names and contact details of all leaders following appointment and confirming that all new appointees have been subject to vetting.
4. Reporting to the statutory agencies any concerns of a child protection nature that have arisen within the independent organisation.
5. Provide written confirmation to the church that adequate insurance cover is in place for its activities.
6. Ensuring that the leader in charge signs annually on behalf of the organisation, the Common Protocol with the congregation providing premises for the organisation's meetings

⁴ BB (NI) and GB (NI) are organisations operated by the local church but also have separate external headquarters. Leaders are nominated, approved and appointed by the local church hence for these organisations points 3 and 4 above do not apply

EMPLOYMENT OF PAID WORKERS 5.6

When a congregation is employing someone to work with children, young people or adults they must follow the Appointment Process as usual (5.1). Guidelines have been produced by the Employment Advisory Group and can be found on the website (www.irishmethodist.org) Other issues that need to be considered are set out below:

Probationary Period

For paid posts, appointment should be conditional on the successful completion of a probationary period which is usually six months.

Annual Appraisal

Employees should have an annual appraisal of the post using a structured scheme that allows both the employee and employer to review progress in different areas of the job; this should use an appraisal form completed by both the employee and the employer to a review meeting which, although structured, should be informal.

Salary

Consideration should be given to awarding an annual salary increment each year if, after the appraisal process is complete, it is agreed that the employee has reached the objective and measurable outcomes set the previous year. Any series of incremental rises should only be up to the maximum point on the salary scale set within the contract of employment.

Child Protection Training

Once appointed the employee should be given a copy of the congregation's child protection policy and attend Taking Care training if they have not already within the last year.

WORKING TOGETHER

RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL LEADERS 6.1

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.
- 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 to the backgrounds, medical history and family circumstances of all children.

TEAM WORK 6.2

1. Each organisation 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 Church Council 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 i.e. 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 i.e. 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.

WORKING WITH PARENTS/CARERS 6.3

The Responsibility of Parents/Carers

Parents/Carers are primarily responsible for their children. They have a responsibility to return consent forms, 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.

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 e.g. a locked filing cabinet, but should be accessible when the group meets. If the group are 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 e.g. 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 Police/ An Garda Síochána or social services will advise, if they do not then contact the IMYCD Office for advice.

DISCIPLINE 6.4

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 played a part in deciding what they should be however it is not always appropriate and in some organisations it is 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

GOOD STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

PHYSICAL CONTACT 7.1

Physical contact with children should be child initiated and appropriate to the age and gender of the child. If a child is in distress it may be perfectly acceptable (and sometimes necessary) to offer comfort and reassurance by placing a hand on their shoulder or taking their hand. This is a valid way of expressing concern and care for children and most children will feel comfortable with it. Making staff and volunteers frightened of any physical contact with children is not an effective way of reducing abuse.

Leaders should avoid being on their own with a child, if a child wishes to talk confidentially with them; they should remain visible to other adults. Leaders must avoid physical contact which may be misconstrued by a young person or other observer.

Leaders should never:

- Spend an excessive amount of time alone with children away from others;
- Take children to your home without the child's parents and the leader of the organisation or other responsible person knowing;
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching in any form;
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged;
- Make sexually suggestive comments about, or to, a child, even in fun;
- Let allegations made by a child go unchallenged or unrecorded;
- Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves;
- Engage in rough or inappropriate behaviour.

- Rely solely on their reputation to protect themselves.

It may sometimes be necessary for leaders to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are very young or have disabilities. In such situations leaders need to be sensitive to the child and undertake personal care with the utmost discretion (see Section 7.7 for more information on working with Children who have Special Needs and Section 12 for an example of a Personal Care Log).

Using Restraint

Sometimes restraint may need to be applied to a child in order to protect him/her from harming themselves or others, or seriously damaging property. The priority at all times must be to protect all children from harm.

The proper use of restraint requires skill and judgement. Only the minimum force necessary to prevent injury or damage should be applied. Leaders should never try to restrain a young person on their own. Another leader may act as an assistant or as a witness. Remember that restraint should be an act of care, not punishment. Following an incident when restraint has been used, a report should be inserted in an Accident/Incident Report form and parents/carers should be notified.

RECOMMENDED RATIOS 7.2

All organisations must abide by the recommended ratios of children/young people to leaders. In determining the ratios of staff to children organisation leaders should bear in mind that there should be a minimum of at least 2 leaders/helpers present at all times.

Young Leaders/Helpers

Young leaders (aged between 15 and 18) should not be left alone in a supervisory capacity with children. They may, however be counted in the ratios as long as other adult leaders are present and in charge.

Ratios for Indoor Activities

Under 8 years

0 to 2 years = 1 leader to 3 children

2 to 3 years= 1 leader to 4 children

3 to 7 years= 1 leader to 8 children

8 years and over

8 years and over = 1 leader to 10 children/young people.

There should be a gender mix of leaders with a mixed gender group of children or young people.

Ratios for Outdoor Activities

Under 8 years

0 to 2 years = 1 leader to 3 children

2 to 3 years= 1 leader to 4 children

3 to 7 years= 1 leader to 6 children

8 to 13 years

The recommended ratios for children after 8 to 13 years and over are:

2 leaders to 15 children

One additional leader is needed for every 8 extra children, or part thereof.

13 years and over

The recommended ratios for young people aged 13 and over are:

2 leaders to 20 children (preferably one of each gender)

One additional leader is needed for every 10 young people, or part thereof.

TRANSPORT 7.3

Youth work may involve transporting young people at some stage. Whether this is by car, coach or minibus and whether it is to and from the church building or an organised outing or residential, safety must be considered a priority at all times.

Drivers

When planning an outing, leaders of organisations must exercise discretion as to who the drivers of the vehicles will be. A driver transporting other people's children must be aware of his/her responsibility towards the passengers and drive carefully within the national speed limit. A driver should know what to do in the event of a breakdown or accident and must ensure that they have adequate and up-to-date insurance cover. It is advisable that 'R' drivers (NI) and recently qualified drivers (RoI) should **not** be nominated drivers on an outing or residential due to their lack of driving experience.

In addition leaders should observe the guidelines below which will help ensure protection for both them and the young people.

Minibus Drivers

Northern Ireland

Drivers who obtained their full car driving licence before 1 January 1997 may drive a minibus in the UK (until their licence expires) if they hold a valid full driving licence for private cars and if the vehicle is not being used for hire or reward.

Drivers who obtained their full car driving licence on or after the 1 January 1997 are only licenced to drive a vehicle with up to eight seats (in addition to the driver). To drive a minibus, such drivers need to gain category D1 PCV entitlement on their licence by meeting higher medical standards and passing an appropriate test.

However, a volunteer driver is allowed to drive a minibus with up to 16 passenger seats (in addition to the driver) for social purposes by a non-commercial body, provided that the driver has held a full B licence for at least two years, is 21 years old or over and under 70 years old (unless s/he has passed PCV Medical and gained restriction 120) and the vehicle meets the weight restriction.

Republic of Ireland

In the Republic of Ireland, a person driving a minibus *must* have a full category D driving licence for which they must sit a theory and practical test.

Private Cars

Leaders should avoid transporting a child or young person on their own. It is good practice to have another leader or other children in the car. However, if a situation does occur when a leader has to transport a child alone, they should ensure that other leaders know this is happening and that the child is in the back seat. If possible, parents should be made aware that their child will be in the car on their own with a leader, affording them the opportunity to make alternative arrangements.

Drivers should declare in writing to their insurers that they carry children in their vehicles, and keep a copy of relevant paperwork with their insurance documents.

Seatbelts and Child Restraints

Organisations or individuals who carry other people's children in cars must make sure they use child restraints for each child carried or adult seatbelts appropriately. Child restraints are rearward-facing baby seats, forward-facing child seats, booster seats and booster cushions. Seatbelts must be worn for any journey, no matter how short. In Northern Ireland it is legally the driver's responsibility to ensure that seatbelts are worn for all passengers under the age of 14 and in the Republic of Ireland it is the driver's responsibility that seatbelts are worn for all passengers under 17 years old.

Booster seats must be used when travelling by car in line with relevant legislation:

Northern Ireland

Children under 12 years of age or less than 4 foot 5 inches in height must use a booster seat. The exceptions according to the law are:

- When travelling by a taxi
- When there are already two booster seats in the back and no room for a third
- Where there is an 'unforeseen circumstance' e.g. giving a child a lift home when their parents have not turned up.

Republic of Ireland

Children less than 150 centimetres in height and weighing less than 36 kilograms (generally children up to 11 or 12 years old) must use the correct child seat or booster cushion. The only exception to using a child seat, booster seat or booster cushion is if a child is travelling in a taxi.

Minibuses, buses and coaches

If driving the congregation's minibus(es), drivers must be named on the congregation's insurance policy. Accident/Incident Report forms and a breakdown logbook should be carried in church minibuses and kept up to date. A first Aid kit and Fire Extinguisher should also be on board and drivers should be familiar with their use.

The law states that it is the driver's responsibility to make sure that each vehicle is in a road-worthy condition before use. Failure to do so may result in the driver being legally liable in the event of any accident. Therefore, each driver must carry out a range of checks to ensure the road-worthiness of the vehicle. If in doubt, the vehicle should **not** be driven.

In minibuses, children over 3 years old must wear seat belts or use child restraints if available. In the Republic of Ireland road traffic regulations require the fitting of seat belts in all forward facing seats in minibuses.

On larger buses and coaches all seated passengers aged 14 years and above must wear seat belts if they are fitted. The driver must notify passengers when they board that they have to wear their seatbelts and/or signs must be displayed at every seat.

When booking a minibus, bus or coach, make sure it has seat belts and ask whether child restraints can be provided or whether you can use your own. But be aware that it may not be possible to fit them properly because the seats and seat belts are different from cars.

Supervision while Travelling

Leaders who accompany young people in minibuses/coaches/boats/trains etc should, where possible, sit among the young people and be dispersed in the vehicle. For example, there

should be at least one adult travelling in the back of a minibus and preferably near the exit points of the vehicle. Their group members must be in the sight of a leader at all times.

RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMMES AND OUTINGS 7.4

Churches and organisations can offer a wide range of activities outside church premises. These may include day trips to the seaside, forest parks, theme parks, visits to the cinema, theatre, museums and shopping trips. As well as this, residential programmes often become the highlight of any congregation's youth programme, offering a whole new world of relationships and events. While recognising the tremendous impact these trips can have on a young person's emotional, physical and spiritual development, the leader in charge ought to note the following:

The Residential Centre

Check your location and accommodation. Ensure that it is adequate for your groups and activity. The Centre must have adequate insurance cover for your group and the activities it hopes to engage in. Insurance should in particular cover high-risk activities e.g. canoeing, rock climbing etc. The Centre should inform you of its rules and regulations. Make every effort to be aware of its timetable e.g. whether it has a lights out time, meal times, what time it expects the group to arrive and to depart. The Centre should provide access to First Aid/GP in the event of an emergency. The Centre should also provide separate sleeping accommodation for males/females.

Parental Consent

Parents'/carers' consent must be obtained when taking any young person away for a residential or outing. The Consent Form for Special Outings /Activities /Residential Programmes should be used (See Section 12).

Before taking a group away, ensure that parents/carers are aware of the following:

- The programme/activities their child is encouraged/expected to participate in, especially high risk activities e.g. bouldering, canoeing etc.
- Whether there will be shopping trips or other free time in town areas and, if so, the level of supervision during such trips.
- The names of leaders/helpers accompanying the group and a contact number. (Where possible it is advisable to arrange a pre-residential briefing for the parents, giving information and allowing parents an opportunity to meet the leaders/helpers).

- The Centre telephone number and address.
- The group's "contract" i.e. what rules the young people will be asked to abide by, and possible consequences if these are broken.
- What clothes and other items the young people might be expected to need.
- How much pocket money might be sufficient (it is advisable to set a limit on this).
- That the names and contact details of all young people and leaders attending a residential/camp etc. will be left with a nominated person in the congregation.

Young People

Young people must have parental/carer consent to participate in the residential programme and its named activities. They should be fully informed of the nature of the residential programme, i.e. what is expected of them. They should never be coerced or forced into any activity with which they are uncomfortable. They should be involved in the drawing up of rules and a contract for behaviour and be made aware of sanction should they fail to comply.

Risk Assessment

Risk Assessment will help leaders when planning events to consider the hazards and risks that the group will come across during the time that the children are in their care. A Risk Assessment form should be completed for each outing, residential or community/outreach event e.g. Church auction or Sunday school picnic (for more information on Risk Assessment, see Section 9.2).

Checklist

- What is the best time to go – time of year, time of week?
- How will you get there?
- How much will it cost?
- Have you completed a Risk Assessment form? (see Risk Assessment form in section 12)
- Is the place you are visiting suitable for the age range you are taking?
- Is the proposed outing age appropriate, e.g. is the film, or the theatre show suitable?
- Can the venue cater for any children who have special needs?
- What food will be provided and will this be appropriate for children who have allergies?
- Do we have enough leaders?
- Is there a good gender mix of leaders (if appropriate)?
- Does the outing warrant additional insurance?
- Has consent been given by parents/carers? (see Special Consent form in section 12)
- Has consideration been given to places to stop for refreshments/toilets?
- Is there an alternative plan if the venue weather dependent?

Remember to inform a nominated person from the congregation of your exact location, contact mobile phone number and home contact numbers in case of emergency for all children, young people and leaders (see Residential/Outing form in section 12).

When the outing or residential is over, leaders should carry out a review and ask what went really well and what could be improved on?

CHURCH SLEEPOVERS 7.5

Youth Groups are increasingly using church halls as overnight accommodation. Before such a venture is considered, organisers should think through security and safety issues. A Risk Assessment form is recommended (see section 9.2).

The following checklist should be used to ensure the accommodation is suitable:

- Parental Consent must be sought.
- If possible, only ground floor accommodation should be considered for sleeping.
- There should be appropriate male/female segregation and supervision (for ratios see section 7.2).
- Sleeping accommodation for leaders/helpers and young people, where possible, should be separate, but the young people's accommodation ought to be easily accessible.
- Leaders/helpers must always avoid staying on their own with a young person. There must always be other leaders/helpers or young people present.
- There should be at least one nominated first aider and a complete first aid box.
- The accommodation should be suitable for any child attending who has special needs.
- There should be adequate mobile phone reception or a landline.
- There should be at least two separate routes leading from the sleeping accommodation and out of the building.
- Fire extinguishers should be positioned in appropriate and accessible locations.
- Doors should be checked for ease of opening in an emergency.
- Exits should be clearly marked and unblocked.
- Clear instructions in the event of an evacuation should be given to both young people and leaders/helpers.
- Portable heating appliances should not impede exits and should be turned off during sleeping hours.
- Leaders/helpers should have torches in case of power failure.
- There should be a "no smoking", "no alcohol", "drug free" rule applied to the premises.
- A record of sleeping arrangements should be kept detailing the names of children and leaders who stayed over and where they slept.

Once these issues have been considered organisers should only proceed if they are confident that the facilities are adequate to meet the needs of the group.

PHOTOGRAPHS 7.6

Since the introduction of the Data Protection Act in 1998, churches must be very careful if they use photographs, videos and webcams of clearly identifiable people. The following guidelines should be adhered to:

- Permission (verbal or written) should be obtained of all the people (children and adults) who will appear in a photograph, video or webcam image before the photograph is taken or footage recorded.
- It should be made clear why that person's image is being used, what use you will make of it, and who might want to look at the pictures.
- Children and young people should not be identified by name or other personal details. These details include email, phone or postal addresses.
- When using photographs of children and young people, it is preferable to use group pictures.
- Obtain a written and specific consent from parents or carers before using photographs on a website.
- Carefully consider location and pose.
- Do not insist that a child participates.

Please note that the sample consent form contains a parental consent for use of images of children for general church purposes.

Young People taking photographs of each other

Leaders should encourage young people to be sensible when taking photos or videoing each other, especially if they are to be posted on the Internet. Young people should be encouraged to let their friends know if their intention is to post photographs online, giving them the opportunity to object. Young people may need to be reminded that once photographs are on the Internet they have no control over where they end up. Organisation leaders may want to include this issue in their code of conduct.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN WHO HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS 7.7

The church should be a place where all children and their families are welcome. Organisations within the church have a duty to be inclusive and to provide opportunities for children and young people of all abilities and regardless of any medical conditions or disabilities.

Be Informed!

Talk with the parents or carers to find out what a child's specific needs are and how they are normally met at home or at school. Assume nothing and don't be afraid to ask! Some children with special needs may require one-to-one help in a group or organisation; perhaps an extra leader will be needed for this responsibility.

For extra information and advice about working with children who have particular special needs and conditions you will find a useful list of websites in section 12.

Personal Care

Children and young people who have a disability can be at greater risk of abuse. They will often require more help with personal care, such as washing, dressing, toileting, feeding, mobility etc., or may have limited understanding and behave in a non-age appropriate way.

If a child needs help with toileting or more intimate care it is important to make sure their dignity is preserved, it is good practice that the same leader as far as possible and the same gender as the child is involved in helping them. A personal care plan can be drawn up to document this.

Be Inclusive!

As far as possible, try to make sure that all children can participate in the activities that you have organised. Try not to rely on one particular method of teaching. For example, a word search is not a suitable activity for a child who is dyslexic; other children may struggle with running or ball games due to poor mobility skills. Biblical teaching can be used to show that we are all different and yet we are all special to God.

TECHNOLOGY

In an increasingly complex world the opportunities for child abuse are growing. Those who care for children need to be aware of the opportunities for abuse through the misuse of the Internet, text messaging, video and other media. While good use of such media can be beneficial we must be vigilant and alert to the possibilities of misuse and the consequent harm that can result to young people.

USING COMPUTERS 8.1

If there is a computer being used within the programme of your organisation, it is important that guidelines are drawn up in order to ensure that it is used for its correct purpose and that it is looked after properly. The leaders could agree on a contract which would be given to and possibly signed by all children, parents and leaders.

Leaders need to be agreed upon the primary purpose of using computers as part of their programme. For example, is it primarily used for the purposes of research in a homework club or recreational games as part of the youth club? Leaders need to agree which websites are suitable and which websites are unsuitable for the age group of children that they are working with. Computers need to be secure with up to date virus checkers and appropriate parental controls. When young people are using computers on church premises they should be well

supervised (see Section 12 for a sample computer contract for use within a church organisation).

CHILDREN AND THE INTERNET 8.2

Whilst the development of the Internet has revolutionised communication systems throughout the world and appropriately used is an excellent resource, care in its application needs to be exercised so that the safety of a child is not compromised. Children need to be aware of online safety in the same way they are taught road safety.

As well as the prevalence of online grooming, children can often be the victims of cyber bullying. Bullying through the use of social media can be more intense and more difficult to escape than bullying that children experience within the playground or school.

The CEOP (Child Exploitation Online Protection) educates parents, leaders and children about the safety issues regarding the Internet. CEOP has a Thinkuknow education programme which can be delivered to children and young people in youth groups. Contact details of CEOP and other organisations working in this area can be found in Section 12.

CHURCH WEBSITES 8.3

When designing or developing a church or youth website or an Internet page please remember the following:

- Parental permission must be obtained before using any pictures of a child/group of children on a website.
- Avoid using photographs of individual children which can be easily copied onto other websites, it is preferable to use a group photograph.
- Names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses should not be given.
- Leaders should be aware that by advertising dates and times of events online, there is the possibility that other people, who would not have otherwise heard of an event, may target the event and turn up without warning.
- It should be made very clear to young people that the website should not be used to make arrangements to meet up with each other casually, e.g. going out for coffee. They need to be reminded that they don't know who is reading their conversation.
- A 'closed' page or password protected site can help to limit who can view the site.

COMMUNICATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE VIA THE INTERNET 8.4

Working with young people often requires a balancing act between being part of the world in which they live, in order to reach them, and yet maintaining a leadership role. In order to understand young people, it is important to live in their culture and at the same time be a role model to them. No place is this balancing act more difficult to get right than in the area of technology, namely the Internet and, in particular, social networking sites, blogs, micro-blogs and other public domain publishing methods.

If used well, methods of communication via the Internet can be effective tools in youth ministry. For example, social networking sites have a group facility which allows online groups to meet in a virtual space where all information and comments are seen by everyone in that group but no-one else.

It is worth noting that everything posted on the Internet – comments, opinions and photos – can potentially be seen and copied by anyone else using the Internet. Social Networking sites have privacy settings for this reason and these limit what any other person, whom you have not accepted as a friend, can view.

Leaders should **NOT** add a child or young person in the organisation in which they are leaders, as a friend or follower on a social networking site. If a leader does choose to accept a child or young person as a friend or follower, it is important always to remember that the child or young person has access to all opinions, information and photos which are posted on the leader's profile, either by the leader or by their other friends. Leaders are recommended to evaluate photos of themselves that are posted on these sites and consider deleting or 'untagging' any photos in which they are depicted in what could possibly be construed as compromising situations, thus preventing the photograph or other material being used inappropriately .

Leaders should not post photographs of young people from the organisation in which they are leaders, on a social networking site or anywhere on the Internet, unless they have written parental consent.

Comments made on the Internet should be considered the same as if they were made in a public place. If a child discloses something to a leader via a social networking site, a chat room or any other public domain publishing method, then the disclosure must be dealt with by following the normal reporting process (see section 3). If a leader is concerned about something that a young person communicates to him or her via the Internet, he or she should encourage the child to talk to a suitable adult about it or arrange to meet with the child (within the usual child protection parameters).

Leaders should limit the direct Internet communication they have with individual children and young people in the organisation of which they are leaders. While communication via the internet can be highly effective, all such communication with children and young people should, as far as possible, be within an open forum, in order to protect both young people and leaders.

COMMUNICATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE VIA MOBILE PHONES 8.5

Those who care for children need to be aware of the opportunities for abuse through the misuse of mobile phone and text messaging. While good use of such media can be beneficial we must be vigilant and alert to the possibilities of misuse and consequent harm that can result to young people. Leaders must also take care to protect themselves and Church Councils should take an active role to ensure that good practice is followed.

Leaders involved in Youth and Children's work should only have children's mobile numbers if the nature of their involvement requires them to phone or text children. Such leaders might include those running an organisation for older teenagers, or an employed youth worker or a volunteer involved in coordinating youth work within the congregation. Church Council should be informed which leaders need to contact children for their specific roles.

- Parent's permission should be sought if the leader in this role will be contacting children via mobile phone.
- A method of accountability should be arranged e.g. copies of texts could also be sent to the Minister or to parents.
- If a leader has a child's phone number it should only be used for the purposes it has been given i.e. the leader should not share this information with other church members.
- It is recommended that an employed youth worker has a separate phone for work purposes rather than using their personal phone for contacting young people.

Texting - Communication not Conversation!

- Texts should be used for the purposes of reminding young people about events which are forthcoming.
- Texts can also be used as a means to encourage young people if it is appropriate e.g. 'hope exam goes o.k.'
- If it turns into a conversation, communications should be ended. A leader can suggest discussing the subject further at the next event or, if they are concerned about the young person; arrange to meet up to talk further (within the usual child protection parameters).

DVD MINISTRY 8.6

Some congregations now film services for home ministry purposes. The congregation should be given prior notice at least two weeks in advance, either from the pulpit or printed on the weekly announcement sheet. Children should not be identified on the film and the DVD should not be used for any other reason than its primary purpose.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

GENERAL SAFETY 9.1

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 Church Councils should keep organisation leaders informed about maintenance work.

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)

RISK ASSESSMENT 9.2

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 e.g. Church auction or Sunday school picnic. There may be times when risk assessments are carried out for a specific purpose or period of time e.g. 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 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 e.g. chairs piled high which a small child could climb onto. 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 e.g. 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 e.g. 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.

INSURANCE 9.3

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.

HIGH RISK ACTIVITIES 9.4

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 and on occasion may not be available. Always plan ahead and check with your insurance company in advance of the event.

FIRE 9.5

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.

FIRST AID 9.6

Leaders should be aware of any medical conditions or allergies that children have and any medication that 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.

Where possible, 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 etc., especially if it is used by various organisations within the church.

LEGAL MATTERS

RELEVANT LEGISLATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND 10.1

The main relevant legislation relating to child protection in Northern Ireland includes:

- The Criminal Law Act 1967
- The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989)
- The Children (NI) Order 1995
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Sex Offenders Act 1997
- The Family Homes and Domestic Violence (NI) Order 1998
- The Criminal Justice (Children) (NI) Order 1998

- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Protection of Children & Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order 2003
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007

RELEVANT LEGISLATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND 10.2

Within the Republic of Ireland the main legislation governing the care and protection of children is:

- The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989)
- The Child Care Acts 1991
- The Domestic Violence Acts 1996
- The Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998
- Children First Guidelines 1999
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Children's Act 2001
- Children Trafficking and Prostitution/Sex Offender Act 2001
- Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006
- Criminal Justice Act 2006
- National Vetting Bureau Bill 2011

DATA PROTECTION 10.3

Under the Data Protection Act (1998) registered organisations should be aware that they must be careful when handling personal data belonging to children and leaders e.g. names, phone numbers, addresses and medical information.

Organisations must only hold data which is adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purpose for which it is held. They must ensure that personal data is accurate and where necessary, kept up-to-date. Organisations must do what they can to prevent unauthorised or accidental access to personal data and must hold data for no longer than necessary. Therefore the following principles should be followed for all organisations in answer to the questions below:

Where should forms be kept?

- All consent forms, accident forms, or any information on children or leaders should be kept in a confidential but accessible location. A locked filing cabinet on church premises is a good example.
- All consent forms, accident forms, or any information on children or leaders should not be kept in a person's own home for long periods of time.
- Leaders must ensure that they have easy access to relevant data such as children's contact details and medical information when the organisation is meeting.
- Incident/Accident forms should also be held securely on church premises.

Who should have access to information on children and leaders?

- Information about children and leaders should be on a need to know basis.
- The exception to this is medical information where it is important that all leaders who are in a position where they are with children in a supervisory role are aware of conditions that children have.
- Information about leaders and children should not be given to any external party but only used for the purpose for which it was given.

What about data kept on computers?

- The same rules apply for data kept on computers; data is confidential and should be kept on church premises. In order to keep the data protected, it should be held on a dedicated password protected file.

How long are records on children and leaders to be kept for?

- Consent forms (basic information such as name, date of birth and address) should be kept for up to six years after the child has left the organisation. Thereafter, it should either be destroyed (i.e. shredded or burnt) or given back to the child or parent.
- The same applies to information on leaders – i.e. it is retained for up to six years after they have left their position.
- Incident/Accident forms and the Register of all leaders should be kept indefinitely.

VULNERABLE ADULTS

Everyone should be treated with respect and dignity. There are many adults in the Methodist Church family, both young and old, who are vulnerable, and they should feel that the Church provides a place of safety and cares for them. Others may become vulnerable for a limited time, following a medical procedure or accident.

WHO IS A VULNERABLE ADULT? 11.1

A vulnerable adult is anyone aged 18 or over who cannot take care of themselves. Vulnerable adults may not be able to protect themselves against significant harm or unfair treatment. This may be because they have a mental health problem, a disability, visual or hearing problems, are old and frail, or are ill. Because of this, these adults may receive a care service in their own

home or in the community. They may live in a residential care home, nursing home or a similar setting⁵.

WHAT IS ADULT ABUSE? 11.2

Adult abuse can take a number of forms and cause victims to suffer pain, fear and distress. Victims may be too afraid or embarrassed to raise any complaint. They may be reluctant to discuss their concerns with other people or unsure who to trust. There may be some situations where victims are unaware that they are being abused or have difficulty in communicating this to others.

PROTECTION FOR VULNERABLE ADULTS 11.3

What to do if Adult abuse is suspected

It is important that if suspected, adult abuse is reported as soon as possible to Police/ An Garda Síochána or social services (for contact information, see Section 3.8).

Vetting those who work with Vulnerable Adults

Northern Ireland

At the time of writing, it is necessary for those who apply to work as a volunteer or in a paid post with vulnerable adults in a regulated position to complete the appointment process which includes an Access Northern Ireland form (for more information see Section 5).

Republic of Ireland

At the time of writing, there is no requirement to vet those working or volunteering in a regulated position with vulnerable adults within the Republic of Ireland. A new Bill is in process of being put in place and this will become a requirement.

A full supplement on working with Vulnerable Adults will be added to this manual in due course. The Methodist Church in Britain has published a full document on this subject – see <http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/safe-update-4-1110-adults.pdf>

⁵ Adult Abuse leaflet, written and produced by Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (NI)

RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED READING

Time for Action – Sexual Abuse, the churches and a new dawn for survivors, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, 2002.

Policing Innocence Rebecca Andrews, 2008.

When Child Abuse Comes to Church Bill Anderson, 1992.

Releasing The Scream Rebecca Newman, 1994.

Our Duty to Care – Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People Volunteer Development Agency, 4th Edition 2007.

USEFUL LINKS - 12

General

- Access Northern Ireland
www.dojni.gov.uk/accessni
- Behaviour Management
www.parenting-ed.org
- Booster Seat Legislation
www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk/advice/seatbelts.htm
- Bullying
www.kidscape.org.uk
www.childline.org.uk
www.beatbullying.org
- Child Abuse
www.nspcc.org.uk

- www.ispcc.ie
- Child Sexual Abuse
www.stopitnow.org.uk
- Children's Rights
www.niccy.org
- Counselling
www.contactyouth.org
www.pcibsw.org/pci.html
www.hse-ncs.ie
- Data Protection
www.ico.gov.uk
- Department of Youth and Children's Work, Methodist Church in Ireland
www.IMYCD.info
- Domestic Violence
www.womensaidni.org
- First Aid
www.sja.org.uk
www.redcross.org.uk
- Health and Safety at work
www.peninsula-uk.com
- Health and Safety Executive
www.hse.ie
- Homelessness
www.simoncommunity.org
- Information on legislation, statistics and news
www.childlink.co.uk
www.childlink.ie
- Disclosure and Barring Service
www.DBS.homeoffice.gov.uk
- Insurance
www.methodistinsurance.org.uk
- Internet Safety
www.thinkuknow.co.uk
www.ceop.gov.uk
www.iwf.org.uk
www.webwise.ie
- Mental Health
www.thesite.org/healthandwellbeing/mentalhealth
- Mobile Safety
www.thinkuknow.co.uk
- National Youth Council Ireland
www.youth.ie
- Road Safety
www.rospa.com
www.rsa.ie
- Self-harm
www.nshn.co.uk

- www.self-injury.org
- Sexual Abuse (adults)
www.nexusinstitute.org
- Substance Abuse
www.contactyouth.org
www.fasaonline.org
- Suicide
www.pipsprogrammes.com
www.lighthouseireland.org
- Vulnerable Adults
www.nidirect.gov.uk/adultawpublic.pdf
www.nhs.uk/CarersDirect/guide/vulnerable-people/Pages/vulnerable-adults.aspx

Taking Care Links – Special Needs

- General
www.throughtheroof.org
www.dDBSbilityaction.org
- Allergies
www.allergyni.co.uk
www.epipen.co.uk
www.kidsallergies.co.uk
- Asthma
www.asthma.org.uk
- Asperger's Syndrome
www.nas.org.uk
www.aspennj.org
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
www.addnet.uk
- Autism
www.nas.org.uk
www.autism.org
- Cerebral Palsy
www.ninds.nih.gov/health
www.kidshealth.org/kid/health_problems
- Diabetes
www.diabetes.org.uk
- Down's Syndrome
www.downs-syndrome.org.uk
www.sdsa.org.uk
- Dyslexia
www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk
www.dyslexia-inst.org.uk
- Dyspraxia
www.emmbrook.demon.co.uk/dysprax/homepage.htm

- Epilepsy
www.epilepsy.org.uk
www.epilepsynse.org.uk
- Expressive Language Difficulties
www.ican.org.uk
www.hanen.org.uk
www.afasic.org.uk
www.specialed.about.com
- Hearing Impairment
www.batod.org.uk
- Moderate Learning Difficulties
www.dfes.gov.uk
- Muscular Dystrophy
www.muscular-dystrophy.org
- Visual Impairment
www.rnib.org.uk
- Wheelchair User
www.wheelchairnet.org