

BLOOMFIELD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND PRACTICE  
DOCUMENT

UPDATED AUGUST 2019



**Bloomfield**

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

TO KNOW JESUS AND SHARE HIS LOVE

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# BLOOMFIELD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

### **Preface**

On behalf of Kirk Session I would like to acknowledge, with deep gratitude, the immense amount of voluntary work that is undertaken throughout Bloomfield Presbyterian Church.

Since its foundation, BPC has been blessed with committed Christian leaders, and many of those who have subsequently moved into a leadership role owe a debt to leaders of earlier days.

With the aim of doing our best to underpin the continuation of this fine tradition, this Child Protection Policy has been updated in accordance with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's *Taking Care Guidelines*. The purpose is to provide guidelines to assist our present and future leaders in their ultimate aim of leading young people to Christ within a safe environment, protecting both our children and leaders whilst involved in this sphere of service.

Issues of child protection and the safety of children and young people are taken very seriously. Consequently, this is an important document which is commended to all who work with our children and young people within our organisations, and others who use our premises.

Thank you for your valued contribution to the children's and young people's work of our church. I look forward to your full support and co-operation in implementing this policy and adhering to its practices.

**Rev Frank Sellar**

**August 2019**

*THIS POLICY AND PRACTICE DOCUMENT SHOULD BE READ IN CONSULTATION WITH 'TAKING CARE TWO', THE CHILD PROTECTION GUIDELINES FOR THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND WHICH IS AVAILABLE IN THE CHURCH OFFICE. THE DESIGNATED PERSON SHOULD BE CONSULTED IF ANY MORE INFORMATION OR CLARIFICATION IS REQUIRED.*

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## **Introduction**

At BPC, our aim is to create and promote a safe environment for children, young people and leaders. Next to proclaiming God's Word and the love of Jesus, nothing could be more important than keeping our children and young people safe.

Children and young people attending organisations or groups meeting in our church do so for many reasons including their personal and spiritual development. They should enjoy these activities with optimum physical safety and free from the threat of abuse.

Similarly, leaders and helpers approved by Kirk Session to work with children and young people should enjoy serving confidently within the guidelines of this policy, and with advice and support from church leadership.

## **Aims**

The aims of our child protection policy are to:

- Create and promote a safe environment for children, young people, leaders and staff;
- Provide clear guidance to all volunteers, helpers, leaders and staff who work with children and young people aged 0 – 18, in matters relating to child protection;
- Promote the highest standards of child protection practice; and,
- Protect leaders and staff from false allegations.

## Policy Statement

Bloomfield Presbyterian Church reaches out to children and young people throughout our local community and welcomes those from households where there is no Presbyterian 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.

This policy statement is aimed at providing a safe environment where children and young people may enjoy social contact, personal and spiritual development and where they, and the leaders and helpers working with them, will be kept safe. Adults selected to work within youth ministries should be secure in the knowledge that they have the full support of the Kirk Session.

### 1. Adoption of Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) Child Protection Guidelines

The Kirk Session of Bloomfield Presbyterian Church has adopted the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's child protection guidelines, *Taking Care 2*, approved by the General Assembly and revised in 2011. All organisations must adhere to these guidelines as agreed by the General Assembly in 2008. The Kirk Session will review this policy every three years and keep *Taking Care* on the agenda of the Kirk Session meetings.

### 2. Leadership

The Kirk Session 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 helpers within this congregation will be more assured of their position and of the confidence placed in them by the Kirk Session.

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

- i) All leaders will be required to complete an application form for leaders. This includes the ACCESS NI vetting process in accordance with legislation and good practice.
- ii) Applicants will be required to provide 2 references by persons who are not relatives, but who have been known to them for more than two years. Three types of photocopied ID are required which will be sent to the Taking Care office along with the application form. References and applications will be kept by the Designated Person in a safe and secure manner.
- iii) Kirk Session will appoint someone along with the Designated Person to meet informally with the applicant. The Child Protection policy will be provided and the *We Care 4 U too* leaflet will also be provided.
- iv) All helpers must be over 15 years of age.
- v) All leaders will be required to attend approved PCI training (see section 3 below). The Foundation training must be completed by all new leaders/helpers irrespective of their previous knowledge and involvement with children and child protection. This is PCI training and relates to our church policy and guidelines. Foundation training is undertaken at Presbytery level. Every 3 years it is essential to attend a Refresher training course, led by a PCI designated trainer. (See full policy for more details).
- vi) Once a letter of approval has been received by the Designated Person from the Taking Care office the applicant can take up their post as leader.

Each application for a position for leader/helper will be considered on an individual basis. It is essential that all paperwork relating to an applicant is received by the Designated Person in advance of them taking up their role. Foundation training must be completed within 12 months.

### **3. Training**

Foundation training must be completed by all new leaders/helpers irrespective of their previous knowledge and involvement with children and child protection. This is PCI training and relates to our church policy and guidelines. Foundation training is undertaken at Presbytery level. Every 3 years it is essential to attend a Refresher training course, led by a PCI designated trainer. (See full policy for more details)

### **4. Reporting 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.

### **5. Designated Person**

The Kirk Session has appointed the following as Designated Person:

**Mrs Pauline Simons.**

The Designated Person will give advice and support to organisations and to the Kirk Session on matters concerning the welfare of children and young people. The Kirk Session will keep organisational leaders updated with the name of the Designated Person. 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.

### **6. Parental Consent Forms**

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

### **7. 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, church sleepovers, photographs, use of technology and working with children who have special needs.

### **8. 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 helpers (See Annex O for a sample code of conduct). **All leaders must abide by the discipline guidelines as set out in *Taking Care*.**



## 9. 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 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 and if this is the case, contacting children through the use of mobile phones should be done within the *Taking Care* guidelines.

## 10. Health and Safety

The Kirk Session expects organisations to adhere to the guidance on 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. Annual Risk Assessment forms must be completed and given to the Health and Safety Officer.

## 11. Transport

Organisations are expected to adhere to the guidance of the *Taking Care* guidelines relating to use of private cars and minibuses for transporting children to and from youth activities. Care should be taken in using recently qualified drivers, and car insurance must be suitable for transporting young people.

## 12. Residentials

Guidance on residential trips is provided by the *Taking Care* guidelines and will be followed on all residential trips organised by all the organisations of Bloomfield Presbyterian Church. A list of relevant contact details must be left with the Designated Person, (or a person approved by the Designated Person) during the period of the residential.

## 13. Register of Leaders

Each organisation will compile an annual register of leaders. This information will be held indefinitely as per *Taking Care Update 16 (Winter 2010)*.

## 14. Implementation and Review

The Kirk Session is responsible for overseeing the implementation of this policy, and will review it every three years.

Signed:..... (Minister)

..... (Clerk of Session)

..... (Designated Person)

## **RESPONDING, REPORTING AND RECORDING**

In all situations where a disclosure has been made, it is extremely important to record the details accurately, whether or not a referral to statutory agencies is made. A sample Report of Concern Form can be found at Annex K.

Information should include:

- Date
- Time
- Place (if relevant)
- Person, or Persons involved
- Action Taken

Records should be clear and factual as they may be used by professionals investigating the case.

This information will be kept in a secure place and shared only with those who need to know about it. The keeping of these records will provide safeguards for the children but will also protect the integrity of the organisations and the Church.

Further information on responding, reporting and recording can be found in Section 3 of *Taking Care 2* which is available from the Church Resource Room or from the Designated Person.

## **ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF OR VOLUNTEERS**

PCI has recently updated its Allegations Policy which states the procedure for dealing with allegations against staff or volunteers. The Allegations Policy works in co-operation with the reporting process, and should be used by leaders, the Minister or Designated Person as a guide to help them through an allegation. The policy can be found at Annex P or online at:

<https://www.presbyterianireland.org/getmedia/417e0123-b2c4-4e17-84d7-2b67a3f671f0/Allegations-Policy-pdf.pdf.aspx>

## RECOMMENDED RATIOS

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 15 - 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 – 2 yrs	1 leader to 3 children
2 – 3 yrs	1 leader to 4 children
3 – 7 yrs	1 leader to 8 children

#### 8 yrs and over

8 yrs 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 - 2 yrs	1 leader to 3 children
2 -3 yrs	1 leader to 4 children
4 -7 yrs	1 leader to 6 children

#### 8 – 13 yrs

The recommended ratios for children aged 8 - 13 yrs and over are 2 leaders to 15 children. One additional leader for every 8 extra children (or part thereof).

#### 13 yrs and over

The recommended ratios for children aged 13 and over are 2 leaders to 20 children (preferably one of each gender). One additional leader for every 10 extra children (or part thereof).

## **WORKING WITH CHILDREN WHO HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS**

Talk with parents or carers to find out about the specific needs of a child, and how they normally are at home and 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 – an extra leader may be needed for this responsibility.

Children and young people who have a disability can be at greater risk of abuse. They will often need 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 by parents/carers to advise leaders on how to best meet the needs of the child. Leaders can complete a personal care log to record how the needs of the child were met each time they attend the organisation.

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.

## **TRANSPORT**

### **Drivers**

When planning an outing, leaders of organisations must exercise discretion as to who the drivers of the vehicles will be. Drivers who are leaders within organisations with an “R” plate should not be responsible for taking children or young people in their car as part of a church organisation or group activity.

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.

### **Minibus Drivers**

Drivers who obtained their full car driving licence before 1 Jan 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 1 Jan 1997 are only licensed to drive a vehicle with up to eight seats (in addition to the driver). To drive a minibus, such drivers need to gain a 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 B licence for at least two years, is 21 years old and under 70 years old, and the vehicle meets the weight restriction.

If driving the congregation’s minibus, 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 a fire extinguisher should also be on board and drivers should be familiar with their use.

### **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. It is legally the driver’s responsibility to ensure that seatbelts are worn for all passengers under the age of 14. Children under 12 and below 4’5” (135cm) must use a booster cushion seat.

### **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 sight of a leader at all times.

## RESIDENTIALS

Whilst recognising the tremendous impact residential programmes, or other external trips can have on a young person's emotional, physical and spiritual development, the leader-in-charge ought to note the following:

### Residential Centre

Check your location and accommodation and ensure that it is adequate for your groups and activities. The following questions should be asked:

- Does the centre have adequate insurance cover for your group and the planned activities?
- What are the rules and regulations of the centre?
- What arrangements does the centre have in case of an emergency (e.g. GP contact)?
- Is there adequate accommodation, including separate accommodation for males and females?

### Parental Consent

Parental/Carer consent **must** be obtained when taking any child or young person away for a residential or outing (see consent form for special outings/activities/residential programmes).

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

- The programme/activities their child will be expected/encouraged to participate in
- The level of supervision during free time/shopping trips in town areas
- Names and contact details of leaders/helpers accompanying the group
- Contact details for the centre
- Expectation of children/young people while they are away, and consequences for inappropriate behaviour
- Advice on appropriate clothing and other items which the child/young person may need whilst away, and how much pocket money would be sufficient.

### Young People

- Must have parental/carers consent to participate in the residential or outing
- Should be fully informed of the nature of the programme and what is expected of them
- Should never be forced to participate in any activity with which they are uncomfortable
- Should be involved in drawing up rules and a contract of behaviour and be made aware of sanctions should they fail to comply

### Risk Assessment

A risk assessment form should be completed for each outing, residential activity.

**THE NAMES AND CONTACT DETAILS OF ALL YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEADERS ATTENDING A RESIDENTIAL/CAMP ETC. WILL BE LEFT WITH THE DESIGNATED PERSON OR A NOMINATED PERSON IN THE CONGREGATION. (THE DESIGNATED PERSON SHOULD BE NOTIFIED OF WHO THE NOMINATED PERSON IS, INCLUDING THEIR CONTACT DETAILS.)**

## **PHOTOGRAPHS**

Since the introduction of the Data Protection Act 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.
- When using photographs of children and young people, it is preferable to use group pictures.
- Carefully consider location and pose.
- Do not insist that a child participates.
- Written consent should be obtained from parents or carers before using photographs on a website (this can be included on the general consent form).

From time to time a video camera may be used during a church service, or other church related activity held in the sanctuary. The purpose of this is to ensure that everyone within the church sanctuary can see what is happening at the front of the service during special services. Should the video camera be used to record images (for example as part of a DVD ministry) at least 2 weeks' prior notice must be given by way of an announcement from the pulpit, or in the announcement sheet.

### **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. Young people may need to be reminded that once photographs are on the internet they have no control over where they end up.

## **TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION**

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 consequences to young people that can result.

### **Church or Youth Group website**

When designing or developing a church or youth website or internet pages please remember the following:

- Parental/carer consent must be obtained before using any pictures of a child/group of children are used. If possible photographs of individual children should be avoided.
- 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 or turn up without warning.
- The website should not be used by the young people to make casual arrangements to meet up.
- A closed page or password protected site can help to limit those who can view the site.

### **Communication with Young People via the Internet**

Leaders should think carefully before adding a child or young person in the organisation in which they are leaders, as a friend or follower on a social networking site. As a general rule leaders should not be adding or accepting friend requests from young people under the age of 18 to their personal accounts.

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 comments, opinions, information, and photos which are posted on a leader's profile, either by the leader or their 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. 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).

It would be wise for leaders not to get involved in lengthy or intense engagements online, setting boundaries is encouraged. While communication via the internet can be highly effective, all such communication with children and young people should be, as far as possible, within an open forum, to protect both young people and leaders.

Communication on social networking sites should be through public forums and not private messaging. If organisations wish to use Facebook or other social networks, they should set up a private Facebook page or the equivalent which is only accessible by request or invitation.



One account should be created for the leader-in-charge to use or a small group to share. A copy of these login details should be supplied to and stored by the designated person. All messages should be communicated in public via the 'Wall', although if there is a need to communicate something to a specific individual's inbox, a copy should be sent to the record email account.

Leaders should not post any photos of young people from organisations in which they are leaders on Social Networking sites or anywhere else on the internet unless they have written parental consent.

### **Communication with Young People via Mobile Phones**

Those who work with 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 Kirk Session 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 co-ordinating youth work within the congregation. Kirk Session should be informed about which leaders need to contact children for their specific roles.

- Parental 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 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.
- 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. support during exams).
- 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 arrangement to meet up to talk further (within the usual child protection parameters).

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

Creating a safe environment for everyone is the responsibility not only of the leader-in-charge, but also of every leader and helper. Adequate supervision should be provided at all times.

Leaders of organisations should be kept informed (by Church Committee and Kirk Session) of any maintenance work taking place which could have an impact on their work with children or young people.

BPC should be aware of the advice included in *A Guide to Health and Safety for your Local Church* issued to all congregations on behalf of the Presbyterian Church by Peninsula Business Services Limited.

The leader-in-charge should have:

- Access to a phone in case of emergency (make sure there is adequate mobile phone reception if there is no landline on church premises).
- Accident report forms readily available.
- Contact details for all children and young people.
- Knowledge of how many people are present at each event (in case of an evacuation).

### Risk Assessment

Congregations must demonstrate, in the event of an insurance claim, that they took 'reasonable care' to protect the children and adults attending their organisations.

A risk assessment form should be completed/reviewed by 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. There may be times when it is necessary to carry out a risk assessment for a specific purpose or period of time (e.g. for 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.

Completed forms should be returned to the appointed Health and Safety representative. It is important that if a risk is identified on a risk assessment form, an adequate control is put in place. At times, it may be necessary to bring an issue to Church Committee for it to be addressed.

The following may be helpful when completing the risk assessment form:

- Hazard – something which may cause harm.
- Risk – chance that person may be hurt by a hazard.
- Control – something that can be put in place or something that can be changed to limit the risk.

It may not be possible 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!

## **Fire**

All leaders should be aware of the location of fire exits and ensure that access is not obstructed. Leaders should know where the nearest fire extinguishers are located; these must be checked regularly by a qualified person. Fire drills should be conducted to ensure that all members know what evacuation procedure to follow in the event of a real fire.

## **First Aid**

Leaders should be aware of any medical conditions that children have and any medication they are currently taking. This information should be provided on parental consent forms. Leaders must ensure that this information, along with contact details for parents/carers, is easily accessible to them when the organisation meets, and also when on outings, residential programmes and camps.

- A first aid kit should always be available on church premises and at planned events away from the church.
- The first aid kit should be stocked with the appropriate in-date items and one person should be responsible for replacing items, especially if used by various organisations within the church.
- Medication should never be given without written consent from parents or doctors; it should be clearly marked and be kept out of reach of children.
- Each organisation should have at least one nominated and adequately trained first aider.
- All leaders should be aware who the first aiders are and alert them in the event of an injury or accident.
- Once first aid has been administered, an accident form should be completed and leaders should make every effort to communicate with parents/carers what has happened and any treatment that been given.
- If a child needs taken to hospital leaders should make every effort to contact parents/carers as soon as possible.

## COMMON PROTOCOL

The Common Protocol is an agreed procedure for churches relating to independent organisations working with children and young people, regularly using the church premises. The Protocol has been agreed by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Church of Ireland, Methodist Church in Ireland and Boys' Brigade (NI), Girls' Brigade (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 at Annex G and the general principles are outlined below:

### What does it do?

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

### What the Church is responsible for:

- Recruiting, selecting and appointing (including vetting) all church based children's/youth leaders **including leaders for BB (NI)**.
- Providing child protection training to all church based children's youth leaders **and leaders for BB (NI)**.
- 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.
- Ensuring that the Clerk of Session signs annually, on behalf of the church, the Common Protocol with each fully independent organisation using church premises.
- Ensuring the safety of the premises.

### What a fully independent organisation is responsible for:

- Recruiting, selecting and appointing (including vetting) leaders/workers in their organisations.
- Providing child protection training to the leaders/workers for their organisation.
- 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.
- Reporting to the statutory agencies any concerns of a child protection nature that have arisen within the independent organisation.
- Providing written confirmation to the church that adequate insurance cover is in place for its activities.
- 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.

## **DATA PROTECTION**

Leaders of 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.

Data must only be held which is adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purpose for which it is held. Leaders must ensure that personal data is accurate and where necessary, kept up to date. Organisations must also do what they can to prevent unauthorised or accidental access to personal data and must hold data for no longer than necessary.

### **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.
- 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 young people should be on a need-to-know basis.
- The exception to this is medical information where it is important that all leaders 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 should records on children and leaders be kept?**

- Consent forms (basic information such as name, date of birth, 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 about leaders – 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.

**CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR LEADERS/HELPERS**

- DO** be aware of your position and responsibility as a leader towards individuals in your care.
- DO** plan activities ensuring adequate supervision.
- DO** listen and believe.
- DO** keep an incident/accident book for your group.
- DO** follow the recommended reporting procedure.
- DO NOT** if possible, be left alone with an individual child or young person.
- DO NOT** allow or engage in inappropriate touching in any form.
- DO NOT** do things of a personal nature for individuals that they can do for themselves.
- DO NOT** allow rough horse-play.
- DO NOT** promise to keep secrets.
- DO NOT** ask leading questions.
- DO NOT** permit bullying.
- DO NOT** believe 'it could never happen to me'.
- DO NOT** rely on just your good name to protect you.

## Appointment of Leaders

