

# Taking Care Update



Issue 7 - Autumn 2008

## Communication between leaders and children via Mobiles phones

Following requests from leaders and youth workers, guidelines on this topic have been produced (see overleaf). This has been done in consultation with the Youth and Children's office, parents, youth workers and young people themselves. Bearing in mind that our congregations are so diverse we are encouraging congregations to make their own policy on this area but based on these guidelines. Guidelines regarding communication with young people via the internet will follow in the next Taking Care Update. If you have any questions about the guidelines then please do not hesitate to contact Deborah.

### Catch-up Designated Persons Training

Monday 17<sup>th</sup> November Hopelink Centre, Belfast 7:30pm

Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> November Downshire Road Presbyterian, Newry 7:30pm

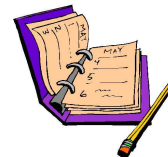
**These are repeat sessions** – do not attend if you have been to Designated Persons Training in 2007 or 2008. These training sessions are for recently appointed Designated Persons or for those who were not able to attend the previously arranged events. **You must register** via email or phone to let Deborah know if you intend to be present (if there is not enough interest the event will be cancelled).



### Access NI have Apologised

for the considerable delay in the POCVA checks. Forms are now taking at least 12 weeks instead of the promised 4 weeks. Paul Goggins, MP, Minister of State at the Northern Ireland Office issued the following statement: *"I have approved additional staff and resources –doubling capacity—so that AccessNI can tackle the backlog which has been caused by the huge demand for 'enhanced certificates'"*

But why the huge demand for enhanced certificates? You may have been shown a letter from a leader in charge issued by one of the education and library boards demanding that all leaders should be checked. As most of you know, it has always been and still is the policy of the Presbyterian Church to only check *new* leaders, this is what we have been advised by the DHSSPS. By other organisations insisting all existing leaders/employees are checked it's no wonder there is such a backlog! So please pass on all of any of these letters to Deborah at the Taking Care Office and remember to check only *new* leaders.



### Dates for your Diary

**16<sup>th</sup> November**  
Internet Safety evening  
for Parents  
1 Kilraughts Presbyterian

**17<sup>th</sup> November (Belfast)**  
**18<sup>th</sup> November (Newry)**  
Catch Up Training for  
Designated Persons

**25<sup>th</sup> April 2009**  
Taking Care Conference  
Church House

Anti-bullying week 17<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> November, check out the Northern Ireland

Anti-bullying forum website: [www.niabf.org.uk](http://www.niabf.org.uk)

Taking Care Office, Church House, Belfast BT1 6DW (028) 90 417229 Email: [takingcare@presbyterianireland.org](mailto:takingcare@presbyterianireland.org)



## Communication between leaders and children via Mobiles phones

Those who care for children<sup>1</sup> need to be aware of the opportunities for abuse through the misuse of mobile phones 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 be vigilant to protect themselves and Kirk Sessions should take an active role to ensure that good practice is followed.

We encourage each congregation to have a policy on this issue; below are some guidelines to help you:

- Most leaders involved in youth and children's work will not be required to phone or text young people and so should not have the child's mobile phone number<sup>2</sup>. However, some leaders will perhaps contact children via mobile phones due to their particular role, for example: a full time youth worker, an intern or student on placement for a year at the congregation, or a volunteer involved in co-coordinating youth work within the congregation<sup>3</sup>.
- Kirk Session 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 the young person via mobile phone.
- A method of accountability should be arranged e.g. copies of texts could also be sent to the Minister.
- 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 a full time 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 of times and places to meet etc.
- Texts can also be used as a means to encourage young people if appropriate e.g. 'hope the exam goes o.k.'
- If it turns into a conversation, communication 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 usual child protection perimeters).

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of child protection a child is defined as a person under 18 years old

<sup>2</sup> A consent form or sign in sheet should have parents'/carers' phone number in case of an emergency.

<sup>3</sup> The policy of the Youth and Children's Office is that members of PCI outreach teams and leaders of camps (except the leader in Charge) must not contact children or young people involved via mobile phones.