

Taking Care Update

Issue 8 - Winter 2008/09



Education Boards and POCVA checks



You may have been shown a letter issued by one of the education and library boards demanding that *all* leaders should be checked. These were sent to groups who receive grant Aid from the Education Board. 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 (Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety). Thankfully I can now announce that a compromise has been reached.

The Education Board has agreed with us the following:

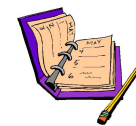
- All **Leaders in Charge** should have undergone a POCVA (Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults) check if they have not already (either under Access NI or with the older POCVA forms). This is regardless of whether they have been appointed since 2005 or not. For example, a BB Captain, Leader in Charge of Youth Club etc.
- This should be achieved by **March 2009**.
- As for other leaders, please **DO NOT** check all of your leaders as this will add a strain on the resources and cause a backlog which would affect everyone. Continue to check all new leaders as usual.



Boys Brigade

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland extends a warm welcome to the new Regional Director of the Boys Brigade, Mr Jonathan Gracey. The new Director and I have met to discuss the Common Protocol which defines the relationship between organisations such as Boys Brigade and their host congregation.

It is now clear that BB leaders, this includes Officers and Helpers, are appointed by the host congregation and must therefore complete the PCI application form for leaders that all other new organisational leaders complete (the Access NI form). This form should be signed by the Designated Person or Minister as usual and sent to the Taking Care Office. The applicant must *still* complete the BB's application form (LREG1) although this will not police check them so no unnecessary duplication is being carried out. The Church shall confirm to BB Headquarters that the appointment procedure has been completed; this includes an application to Access NI. If a newly appointed BB leader has recently been police checked by the congregation within another capacity in the past six months then they do not need to be re-checked. For a copy of the *Revised* Common Protocol please contact the Taking Care Office.



Dates for your Diary

To find out where Taking Care Training is happening at a congregation near you, then please contact the Taking Care Office.

29th January 2009

Training for Ministers
North Belfast, Templepatrick
& Carrickfergus Presbyteries
Ballyhenry Presbyterian

5th February 2009

Training for Ministers
Ards, East Belfast & South
Belfast Presbyteries
West Church Bangor

25th April 2009

Taking Care Conference
Church House



Communication between Leaders and Children via the Internet

Following requests from leaders and youth workers, guidelines on this topic have been produced. We are encouraging congregations to look at their practice in this area. Please speak to Deborah if you have any questions or comments to make.

Social Networking sites and Chat Rooms

- Leaders should avoid communicating with children via social networking sites¹ and chat rooms.
- If a leader is concerned about a child or if a child discloses something to them via a social networking site or a chat room then the disclosure must be treated in the normal fashion.
- The policy of the Youth and Children's Office is that members of PCI outreach teams and leaders of camps must not contact children or young people involved via social networking sites or any kind of internet chat rooms.

Websites²

- A password protected website or login area will make a youth website more secure.
- It should be made very clear to young people that websites should not be used to make arrangements to meet up with each other casually. They need to be reminded that they don't know who is reading their conversation.
- 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 events, may turn up without warning. This may not always be welcome and so leaders are to think through what events they want advertised on websites and what they would do if this situation arose.

Photographs

- Avoid using photos of individual children. In preference use a group photograph.
- When putting up photographs of children on a website, they should not be identified; names and addresses should not be given.
- Written and specific consent from parents or carers must be obtained before putting photographs of children on a website or a social networking site.

¹ Examples of Social Networking sites are Bebo, Facebook and Myspace.

² For more information about Congregational Websites, see Internet Use Guidelines produced by the Communications Development Committee www.presbyterianireland.org/pdfs/pci_internet_guidelines.pdf.