

SECTION 2

GOOD STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

2.1 Aim

This section aims to provide more detailed advice on good practice for organisations working with children and young people.

It includes the following topics:

- Good Team Work
- Recommended Ratios
- Responsibilities of the Organisation Leader
- Code of Conduct for Young People
- Discipline and the Question of Appropriate Physical Contact
- Recruitment and Selection of Leaders
- General Safety
- Obtaining Police Record Checks
- Review of Policy by Kirk Session
- Transport
- Parental Consent Forms
- Residential Programmes
- Training Leaders/Helpers

2.2 Good Team Work

1. It is advisable that each organisation, on a yearly basis, draws up clearly defined aims and objectives for its overall running.
2. Within each organisation, a clearly defined line of accountability should be in place, whereby all leaders/helpers report to the appointed leader in charge. The leader reports to the Kirk Session with whom ultimate responsibility lies. It is advisable that the Kirk Session provides support, pastoral oversight, and a yearly appraisal for all the work among children and young people.
3. At any given meeting, leaders/helpers must be informed of the specific programme, and be clear about one another's responsibilities.
4. Acquaint the team (especially new leaders/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. They will be interested in all sorts of things.
5. Parents should be supplied with the name and telephone number of the leader in charge of the organisation and what the organisation provides.
6. Each organisation leader/helper must be fully acquainted with the Child Protection Policy and referral procedure.
7. Each leader/helper must be acquainted with, and be in full support of, the discipline procedure for the organisation.
8. 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/helpers can share information about issues and any difficulties which may have arisen.
9. Every organisation should aim to have a trained first aider. This is particularly important where high risk activities are involved. Leaders/helpers should have up-to-date contact numbers for parents/guardians.

A trained first aider will have completed a recognised first aid course delivered by St John's Ambulance, Red Cross, Order of Malta or other recognised organisations.

10. A consent form should be completed by parents/guardians at the beginning of each year. Special consent forms should be completed for trips/special activities. The Organisation Leader should hold completed consent forms.

Responsibilities Of The Organisation Leader

To ensure that the organisation responds in a correct and prompt manner to accidents, or suspected child abuse, the organisation leader should ensure that:

- There is an Accident/Incident Book/Forms on the premises, or with the leader;
- He/she has immediate access to names, addresses and telephone numbers of the children/young people attending the organisation;
- There is access to a telephone in the event of an emergency;
- All leaders are aware of the reporting procedure in the event of an accident;
- All leaders are aware of the reporting procedure in the event of an allegation of abuse;
- He/she has a stock of Report of Concern forms;
- He/she knows the name and telephone number of the Designated Person;
- He/she is satisfied that all leaders have a good understanding of the issues relating to confidentiality.

Recommended Ratios

Indoor Activities

All organisations are encouraged to 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 two leaders/helpers present at all times.

Under eight years

0 to 2 years	=	1 member of staff to 3 children
2 to 3 years	=	1 member of staff to 4 children
3 to 7 years	=	1 member of staff to 8 children

Eight years and over

8 years and over	=	2 members of staff (preferably one of each gender) for up to 20 children/young people.
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There should be one additional staff member for every ten extra children and/or young people or part thereof.

Young people (those under 18 years of age) who are helping leaders should not be left alone in a supervisory capacity with children. They may, however be counted as staff members to make up stated ratios, so long as other adult leaders are present and in charge.

Outdoor Activities

Under eight years

0 to 2 years	=	1 member of staff to 3 children
2 to 3 years	=	1 member of staff to 4 children
3 to 7 years	=	1 member of staff to 6 children

Eight to thirteen years

The recommended ratios for children aged eight to thirteen and over are:

Up to 15 children = 2 adults (preferably one of each gender)

One additional adult for every 8 extra children, or part thereof.

Thirteen years and over

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

Up to 20 young people = 2 adults (preferably one of each gender)

One additional adult for every 10 young people, or part thereof.

Children With Special Needs

The church has a Christian duty to be inclusive and to provide opportunities for children and young people of all abilities. Churches and organisations need to be aware that 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, may have limited understanding and behave in a non-age appropriate way. For example, a young person of 17 might behave in a manner more akin to a 2-3 year old, particularly in demanding cuddles or sitting on a worker's lap. Others experience difficulties in communication because they are blind, or deaf/blind, and are reliant on physical contact for communication. Some may have severe learning difficulties. All these factors make it harder to uncover abuse when it is occurring and in setting boundaries which take into account the needs of those young people.

There is therefore a need for extra vigilance recognising that a worker may encounter the following difficulties:

- Children may not fully understand what is said to them, or may not be able to express themselves in ways that can be understood.
- The worker may not possess the appropriate personal communication skills (e.g. specialised spoken and non-verbal communication such as Makaton signs and symbols, British Sign Language etc.)
- The need for regular contact with the parents/carers.

There are a number of reasons why a child with a disability is more vulnerable to abuse:

- Children with disabilities tend to have more physical contact than those without disabilities (i.e. therapists, care workers) and may require higher levels of personal care.
- The definition of what constitutes abuse is wider for children with disabilities. (This may include force-feeding, financial abuse, over-medication and segregation).
- Children with special needs may require an individual care plan which may result in an increased leader ratio.

2.3 Code of Conduct for Young People

In every aspect of life organisations function best where there are clear guidelines and structures. The following suggested code of conduct for children and young people recognises this basic fact. The code of conduct will reflect the particular characteristics of individual groups.

It is recommended that at the commencement of the organisation's year a code of conduct is drawn up with the members' participation. While it is recognised that discipline may seem at times to be restrictive to young people, it is best enforced with their agreement. Such a code of conduct will help to create a safe, secure environment and an atmosphere where children will feel that they can confide in the leaders/helpers.

A Sample "Club Code of Conduct"

As members of this club we will:

1. Respect the authority of the club leaders/helpers.
2. Respect the views and feelings of other members of the club.
3. Respect the right of every club member to express their view/opinion.
4. Respect the right of every club member to be heard/listened to.
5. Respect both leaders'/helpers' and other club members' personal privacy and property.
6. Show due care and responsibility for equipment and property.
7. Agree that the following activities/behaviours are deemed unacceptable:
 - (i) Consumption of alcohol and smoking within the confines of the club building or during club activities.
 - (ii) Physical abuse of other club members and/or leaders/helpers.
 - (iii) Verbal abuse including "put-downs" of other club members and leaders/helpers, either directly or electronically e.g. mobile phones, chat rooms etc.
 - (iv) Wilful destruction or damage of property or equipment.
 - (v) The misuse of any substance or stimulant.

When implementing the code of conduct, leaders need to be insistent, consistent and persistent.

2.4 Discipline

When disciplining children and young people:

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

You may wish to include discipline issues in your code of behaviour and you may wish to refer to discipline in your Child Protection Policy.

The Question Of Appropriate Physical Contact

As a general principle leaders/helpers are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with young people. One should avoid physical contact which may be misconstrued by a young person or other observer. It may of course be necessary and appropriate to offer comfort and reassurance to a child by placing a hand on a shoulder. 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.

One should take reasonable precautions i.e. if possible, ensure that you are not left alone with a child for long periods, or, if a child wishes to talk confidentially with you, at least ensure that another leader/helper knows where you are and who you are with. If possible, try to remain visible to the other leaders/helpers. Do not rely solely on your good name or reputation to protect you.

It does **not** make sense to:

- Spend excessive amounts 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.

Leaders and other staff should **never**:

- Invite a child to their home alone;
- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay;
- Allow or engage in inappropriate touching of 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.

Note: 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. Except in an emergency, these tasks should be carried out only with the consent of parents. In such situations leaders need to be sensitive to the child and undertake personal care with the utmost discretion.

Protecting Children From Harming Themselves

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. It should never be used to inflict pain or as a general means of control.

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 and control, not punishment.

Following an incident when restraint has been used, a report should be inserted in the Accident/Incident Report Book/Form.

2.5 Recruitment and Selection of Potential Leaders/Helpers

As we have seen in Section One, it is necessary to have a recruitment policy in place to select leaders/helpers to provide a safe environment. A proper selection 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 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.

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

The following steps are necessary to ensure good practice:

Defining the Role: This involves thinking through exactly what the role of a new leader/helper is considered to be, and what skills will be required for them to perform effectively.

Application Form: This should be supplied together with appropriate information as to what is expected of leaders/helpers. This form allows prospective leaders/helpers to provide all the relevant details, which will be treated in confidence. (See Section 3).

It is important that every leader fills in an Application Form, so that Kirk Sessions have a complete record of all leaders.

Declaration: All leaders/helpers will be asked to declare any past criminal convictions, and cases pending against them, or any investigation of a complaint that is unresolved.

Interview: The organisational leader and/or the Minister, should meet the person. This is also the opportunity to explain the Child Protection Policy and ensure that the person has the ability and commitment required to put the policy into practice.

Referees: The names of two referees should be given by the applicant. The referees should not be family members. Where appropriate, references should be sought from their previous place of worship, preferably from someone who has had first hand knowledge of their previous work with children/young people. (See Reference Request Form TCF4/04 in Section 3)

Vetting: The General Assembly has resolved that all new volunteers/applicants who will have substantial access to children/young people, or adults with a learning disability will undergo a PECS check from January 2005. (See the section obtaining Police Record Checks). This applies to Northern Ireland. There is no facility to obtain checks in the Republic of Ireland currently.

Induction: An induction process should take place, including familiarising the new leader/helper with your Child Protection Policy, introduction to other workers, children, parents etc. On appointment, all leaders/helpers should be given a copy of the organisation's Child Protection Policy and procedural guidance. The leader/helper should give a written acknowledgement that they have received this.

Trial Period: Appointment should be conditional on the successful completion of a trial period (usually six months). There should be a facility for a yearly review of all leaders/helpers. In particular, Kirk Sessions should consider the following areas: reliability, trust, relationships with children, parents and other leaders, contribution to the organisation and co-operation with the team. Review should always be carried out within a positive framework.

Guides, Scouts, Crusaders and other Independent Bodies

Leaders of Girl Guides, Scouts, Crusaders and other independent bodies are not appointed by Kirk Sessions, even where a unit operates within a Presbyterian Church hall. Guides and Scouts have their own procedures for appointment but they must consult with the local church in the appointment of leaders. Independent bodies, however, take ultimate responsibility for any appointment made.

If a Kirk Session is concerned that some practice of an independent body may breach its Guidelines, this should be discussed with the leader in charge of the organisation.

If the matter cannot be resolved satisfactorily, it should be raised directly with the Headquarters of that organisation. Where this becomes necessary, it would be helpful for the Board of Social Witness to be advised.

In general, Kirk Sessions should ensure that any outside youth organisation using its premises is operating in accordance with the principles laid down in these Guidelines.

Boys Brigade and Girls Brigade

The BB and GB are in total agreement with Taking Care, the 3rd Edition of the PCI Guidelines. It is essential that every GB/BB leader/helper completes the Application Form for leaders/helpers TCF2/04, and follows the normal recruitment and selection processes.

Crèche and Children's Church

It is up to Kirk Sessions to decide whether all helpers within crèche and children's church need to complete an application form. In all cases, leaders in charge should be asked to complete one.

Detailed Procedure for the Appointment of Leaders

Kirk Sessions are responsible for the appointment of all leaders and other staff to work in church organisations within their congregations.

It is recommended that the following procedure is followed:

1. The organisation leader advises the Minister that he/she wishes to approach someone as a potential leader.
2. The organisation leader gives the application form to the applicant explaining its nature and that there will be an informal interview arranged.
3. The organisation leader and/or the Minister should meet informally with the candidate to discuss the appointment.
4. The completed application form is given to the Minister, or other nominated Elder, who will hold the form in a safe place.
5. Only the organisation leader, Minister and interviewer should see the application form. It is important to maintain confidentiality at all times.
6. If there is uncertainty about the suitability of a candidate, the Minister should always be consulted. The applicant should be made aware of what is happening and asked whether they consent to a further interview, should this be deemed necessary.
7. The recommendation from the interview is to be recorded in the first box on the Form. Space is provided to state briefly the main reason for the recommendation. PLEASE NOTE: Kirk Sessions should be aware that written records may be subject to scrutiny by another religious or civil court (and in certain cases by the applicants themselves). Information held on computer falls within the Data Protection Act (NI) 1998. Churches need to register with the Data Protection Registrar. For further information see Section 2.11.
8. The Kirk Session receives the recommendation from the interview and makes their decision on the basis of the recommendation. There is space for recording the decision taken/other comments. The form is signed and dated by the Minister and held by him/her or a nominated Elder, in a safe place.
9. From January 2005, if the appointment involves substantial unsupervised access to children, or working with children or adults with a learning disability, then the individual will need to undergo a police record check.
10. The individual is informed that a check is being undertaken which could take four to six weeks. Unsupervised access to children/young people should not be permitted until a clear PECS check has been received.

Obtaining Police Record Checks

The General Assembly has resolved that from January 2005, all volunteers/applicants who will have substantial access to children/young people, or adults with a learning disability, will undergo a police record check.

Substantial access implies that:

- The post involves one to one access to children;
- The circumstances of contact are unsupervised;
- Situations may be isolated;
- There is regular contact.

While previously only ministers, deaconesses and full-time youth workers were checked in Northern Ireland, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland has now agreed a number of job/work descriptions with PECS (Pre-Employment Consultancy Service) which will require to be checked. Currently they are:

- Superintendent of the Sunday School
- Sunday School Teacher/Children's Ministry Leader
- Senior Voluntary Youth Worker
- Voluntary Youth Leader
- Youth Fellowship Leader
- Youth Organisation Leader/Assistant Youth Organisation Leader
- Youth Worker (Paid)
- All Age Drama Group Leader
- Crèche Leader/Assistants
- Sexton/Caretaker
- Choir Conductor/Organist/Musical Director/Praise Group Leader
- Leader of Mothers and Toddlers

Detailed job/work specifications can be downloaded from the Board of Social Witness Web-site www.presbyterianireland.org/bsw.

PECS is managed by the Department of Health and Social Services in Northern Ireland. The Department has access to records and registers of people who have either been convicted or cautioned for offences, or who have been reported by their employers because their behaviour at work puts children or adults with learning disabilities at risk of harm, and who would not be considered as suitable for such work in the future.

Access To PECS

Access to PECS is through the Board of Social Witness office in Church House. Congregations must not contact PECS direct. The Board of Social Witness office will be able to offer advice and guidance as to whether a PECS check is required. Please ask for the Nominated Officer or the Deputy Nominated Officer in the Board of Social Witness Office.

A PECS Service is currently not available in the Republic of Ireland.

Periodic Review of Child Protection Policy by Kirk Sessions

It is recommended that Kirk Sessions review their Child Protection Policy at least every three years. The purpose of the review is to assess the effectiveness of its implementation at congregational level, and to address any practical difficulties arising from such implementation. It is suggested that the review be carried out either by the Designated Person and the minister, or the Designated Person and another elder. The Kirk Session may, of course, decide that the Designated Person should not be involved in the review, in which case two other persons should do it.

It is important that the review is not perceived to be an inspection but rather as an opportunity for the Kirk Session to demonstrate its interest in the life of the organisation in general and in the child protection arrangements in particular. The following matters should be discussed with leaders:

Recruitment Practices

What discussion takes place with those interested in becoming leaders to ascertain their suitability?

Does the Kirk Session approve all new appointments and how is such approval sought?

How is the performance of new leaders appraised after six months? How are they supported and encouraged, especially during this critical period?

Discipline

What ongoing help is given to leaders concerning issues of discipline with children and young people?

What particular difficulties (if any) have surfaced in the area of discipline and how satisfactorily have they been dealt with?

Parental Consent Forms

What particular difficulties (if any), are experienced in the completion and storing of parental consent forms? How are any such difficulties dealt with?

Is it your practice to use a generic consent form rather than having one form filled in for each organisation attended? If you use one form only, what difficulties arise (if any), and how are such difficulties addressed?

Feedback from Young People/Parents/Carers.

The Review should include some comments from young people and parents. A sample group could be used for this purpose.

Team Building

What arrangements are in place to enable organisational leaders to meet so that they may periodically review their work? How effectively does the leadership team work together?

In as far as good practice tends to follow when the team works well together, what steps can be taken to develop good (or better) team spirit?

Reporting of Concerns

What concerns or complaints (if any) have been brought to the attention of the leader? If concerns or complaints have surfaced, are you satisfied that these have been dealt with properly or are there issues still outstanding?

Designated Person

What consultation (if any) has taken place with the Designated Person? How may the Designated Person be involved (or become more involved) in the introduction of new leaders to the Child Protection Policy?

Staff/Child Ratios

What difficulties (if any) have been experienced in adhering to the recommended staff/child ratios?

Where it is has not been possible to achieve these staff/child ratios, how has the Kirk Session satisfied itself with the current level of supervision?

It is suggested that a short report of the review be presented to the Kirk Session. It will be encouraging for the leaders of organisations to be assured by the Kirk Session that they are satisfied with the implementation of the Child Protection Policy. Even if there are some areas where improvement is considered to be necessary, Kirk Sessions should affirm the good work that is taking place.

Training

When was child protection training of leaders last carried out? Have all leaders undertaken child protection training?

Register of Leaders

It is good practice for the Kirk Session to keep a register of current youth leaders and dates of resignation of previous leaders. This register should be filled in by each organisation leader at the beginning of each new year and lodged with the Clerk of Session. (See TCF12/04 Section 3).

2.6 General Safety

Safety is of prime importance during any activity. That is not only the responsibility of the leader in charge but of every leader/helper. They should be aware of the following guidelines.

1. There should be adequate supervision by a leader/helper of certain equipment e.g. table tennis tables, snooker tables etc.
2. When using special equipment for your programme e.g. for 'one-off' activities such as trampolining, bouncy castle etc, ensure there is adequate supervision by trained leaders/helpers. You may also require special insurance to cover these higher risk activities. Be aware of the physical environment and remove/avoid items which may cause injury.

If the organisation is undertaking what is deemed to be high risk activities, the leaders/helpers must seek written permission from parents/guardians in advance.

3. If at all possible aim to have a trained first aider present. Where possible, leaders/helpers should be aware of any medication children are currently taking but this should not be given without written consent from parents or doctors. Leaders/helpers should also seek to obtain information concerning allergies and reaction to foods e.g. peanuts. Medication should be clearly marked, out of reach of children and securely locked away.
4. Be aware of the location of fire exits and ensure that they are 'unblocked'. Know where the nearest fire extinguishers are located. These must be checked regularly by a qualified person. Occasionally fire drills should be conducted to ensure that all young people know what evacuation procedure to follow in the event of a real fire. It is helpful to have a record of these.
5. During games or "ice-breakers", be aware of the risks of physical injury and guard against these.
6. Young people must be supervised at all times by a leader/helper while in the kitchen area.
7. Areas where maintenance work is taking place should never be used and where possible should be screened off. Committees and Kirk Sessions should keep organisation leaders informed about maintenance work.
8. A telephone should, where possible, be installed on the premises for safety purposes.
9. Each organisation should have an Accident/Incident Report Book in which to record details of accidents/injuries/witnesses/date.

2.7 Transport

All youth work will involve transporting young people at some stage, whether this is on a club night or to and from a residential programme. Increasingly more church organisations are travelling by train, boat and aeroplane. This demands a higher level of organisation and warrants maximum levels of supervision.

Planning Outings

Leaders of organisations must exercise discretion as to who is permitted to drive cars or mini-buses. The following should be considered at all times:

- Insurance cover must be adequate and up to date.
- The driver needs to be sufficiently aware of his/her responsibility towards the passengers.
- The benefits of driving in convoy and also the dangers.
- Speed limits should never be exceeded.
- The driver needs to know what to do in the event of breakdown or accident.

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

Private Cars

- Drivers should be aware of the limitations of third party insurance.
- Private cars may be used so long as they are not used for hire or for carrying passengers for reward.
- Seat belts should be worn by each passenger at all times.
- Avoid transporting a child or young person on your own. Try to ensure that another leader/helper or other children/young people are with you. If a situation occurs when you have to transport a child alone, ensure other leaders/helpers know this is happening, and that the child is in the rear seat.

Mini-buses/Coaches

A “*mini-bus*” is a vehicle constructed or adapted to carry more than 8, but not more than 16, seated passengers in addition to the driver.

A “*coach*” is a large bus which can carry more than 16 seated passengers and with a maximum speed exceeding 60 mph.

- All drivers of minibuses must have a PSV licence if driving vehicles with more than sixteen seated passengers.
- If driving the congregation’s minibus(es), drivers must be named on the congregation’s insurance policy.
- The law states that it is the driver’s responsibility to make sure that the 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, DO NOT DRIVE THE VEHICLE.**
- When hiring a minibus or larger bus, it is the responsibility of the user group to verify the legality and insurance cover of the operator prior to the use of the transport. If in doubt, ask to see a copy of the operator’s insurance cover and operator’s licence.
- Under existing legislation children may sit:
 - 3 to a seat if under 14
 - 2 to a seat if over 14

Preferably this should be in seats with seat belts/restraints, and with the seats facing forward. Where seat belts are provided the ratio is one child per seat belt. Seat belts must be worn for any journey, no matter how short, and again it is the driver’s/leader’s responsibility to enforce this.

Under EU regulations the minimum age for driving a passenger carrying vehicle with more than eight passengers is 21 years.

Legislation effective from September 1997 requires forward facing seats in minibuses and coaches to have a seat belt for each child carried, when a group of three or more children are on an organised trip.

A single seat belt must not be used by more than one child, nor should a belt be placed around a child who is on an adult’s lap. For the purpose of the legislation:

- A child is a person who is 3 to 15 years of age;
- A seat belt is a minimum of a lap belt with a width not less than 400mm.

Note: It is the driver’s responsibility to ensure that this legislation is complied with.

There is no requirement for urban buses used to transport children to have seat belts. Buses have a different pattern of use and are generally not fitted with seat belts.

Note: In the Republic of Ireland current road traffic regulations require the fitting of seat belts in all forward facing seats in all minibuses.

Leaders/helpers who accompany young people in minibuses should, where possible, sit among the young people. Preferably, a leader/helper should sit near the exit points of the vehicle.

An accident report book/breakdown logbook should be carried in church minibuses and kept up-to-date.

Carry a First Aid Kit and Fire Extinguisher and familiarise yourself with their use.

Supervision in Transport

At least one adult should travel in the back of a mini-bus at all times.

Where possible leaders must be equally dispersed throughout a coach/bus/carriage/boat or plane. Their group members must be in the sight of a leader at all times. An acceptable gender mix of leaders is essential with a mixed gender group.

2.8 Parental Consent Forms

A Multi Purpose Parental Consent Form (TCF5/04) can be found in Section 3.

This should be completed at the start of the year, for the involvement of children in youth organisations. The benefit of this is that you have valuable information throughout the time the young person is with you. Copies of the consent form should be circulated to all the organisations attended by the individual child.

If you go on a day trip or special activity a specific consent form covering this trip/activity should be completed. A sample of such a consent form (TCF6/04) is also contained in Section 3.

Sunday Schools which do not use parental consent forms for week to week involvement of children, must ensure that they obtain written parental consent for any outings.

Before taking children on a residential programme it is important to have a parental/guardian consent form signed. This will include space to give medical information/allergies etc and consent to medical treatment, if necessary.

It is important that parental consent forms can be accessed by the leader in charge, particularly in an emergency. A leader in charge may therefore be the most appropriate person to store the completed forms.

2.9 Residential Programmes/Outings

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 residential 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 group and activity.

1. The Centre must have adequate insurance cover for your group and the activities it hopes to engage in.

Insurance should especially cover high-risk activities e.g. canoeing, rock climbing etc.

2. 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.
3. The Centre must provide access to First Aid/GP in the event of an emergency.
4. The Centre must also provide separate sleeping accommodation for males/females.

Parents

5. Parents/guardians consent must be obtained when taking any young person away for a residential experience. A form must be signed by the parent/guardian and it should also give any relevant medical information e.g. allergies, special diets etc.
 6. Before taking a group away, ensure that parents/guardians 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.
 - If there will be shopping trips and the level of supervision.
 - The names and numbers of leaders/helpers accompanying the group. (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).
- * Names and contact details of all young people and leaders attending a residential/camp etc. should be left with a nominated person in the congregation.

The Young People

7. They must have parental/guardian consent to participate in the residential programme and its named activities (see point 5).
8. They should be fully informed of the nature of the residential programme, i.e. what is expected from them.
9. They should never be coerced/forced into any activity with which they are uncomfortable.
10. They should be involved in the drawing up of rules and a contract for behaviour and be made aware of sanctions in the event of them being broken.

Using Church Halls For Accommodation

If church premises are being used for accommodation certain factors need to be taken into consideration:

11. Only ground floor accommodation is considered suitable for sleeping.
12. There should be appropriate male/female segregation and supervision.
13. There should be at least two separate routes leading from the sleeping accommodation and out of the building.
14. Doors should be checked for ease of opening in an emergency.
Exits should be clearly marked and unblocked.
Clear instructions in the event of fire should be given to both young people and leaders/helpers.
15. Portable heating appliances should not impede exits and should be turned off during sleeping hours.
16. Leaders/helpers should have torches in case of power failure.
17. There should be a “no smoking”, “no alcohol”, “drug free” rule applied to the premises.
18. If there is a telephone in the church, the leaders/helpers should have access to it. If not, they should be aware of the nearest telephone.
19. Leaders/helpers should avoid staying on their own with a young person. Always be sure that there are other leaders/helpers or young people present.
20. Sleeping accommodation for leaders/helpers and young people, where possible, should be separate, but the young people’s accommodation ought to be easily accessible.

Outings

Churches are now offering a wide range of activities outside church premises. These will include day trips to the seaside, forest parks, theme parks – visits to the cinema, theatre, museums and shopping trips. It is essential that parents are informed of any proposed outing and any plan to leave their son/daughter unaccompanied ie for shopping.

1. Is the place you are visiting suitable for the age range you are taking?
2. Is the proposed outing age appropriate, e.g. is the film, or the theatre show suitable?
3. What is the best time to go – time of year, time of week? Are there busy seasons, discounted days?
4. Check that the venue can cater for anyone with special needs.
5. Make sure you have adequate leaders before booking.
6. Does the outing warrant additional insurance?
7. Has consent been given by the parent/carer?
8. Is there an area for eating packed lunches and for the group to let off steam?
9. Do you have an alternative plan if it rains or your venue is closed because of an emergency?
10. How will you get there?
11. How much will it cost?
12. Inform a nominated person of your exact location and contact mobile phone number.
13. Complete a contact sheet and leave with the nominated person.

Review

Carry out a review of the residential/outing with all concerned – what went really well and what could be improved on.

2.10 Training and Resources

Training

Leaders/helpers who work with children and young people are a valuable resource to the church. They should have appropriate training which must include some basic Child Protection Awareness Training along with knowledge of agencies which can provide further training, resources and advice. Training, however, needs to be ongoing and not simply a one-off event.

Within the Presbyterian Church, training can be facilitated through the following channels:

The Board of Social Witness
Telephone Number (028) 9041 7234
where a Presbytery Child Protection Trainer can be provided.

Training may also be available through the Department of Education for Northern Ireland, Health and Social Service Trusts, Nexus Institute NI, Education and Library Boards NI, and the Volunteer Development Agency. Each Health Board in the Republic of Ireland has an Information and Advice Officer. Please contact the Board of Social Witness office for more information.

It is recommended that a record be kept of all training that has been undertaken and who has attended.

Resources

Information on some of the available resources can be found in Section 4 or contact the Board of Social Witness office on (028) 9041 7234.

2.11 Legal/insurance Matters

Relevant Legislation Northern Ireland

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

- The Children (NI) Order 1995
- The Family Homes and Domestic Violence (NI) Order 1998
- The Criminal Justice (Children) NI Order 1998
- The Sex Offenders Act 1997
- The Criminal Justice (NI) Order 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998
- Protection of Children & Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order 2003

Relevant Legislation Republic Of Ireland

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

- The Child Care Act 1991
- The Domestic Violence Act 1996
- The Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998
- Children Trafficking and Prostitution / Sex Offenders Act 2001
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Children's Act 2001

Insurance

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 professional indemnity to cover errors, omissions or negligent advice. Churches are advised to contact their insurance broker for more detailed and up-to-date information on these insurances.

See also factsheet on church insurance in Section 4.

Data Protection

If you are holding information on a computer you need to register with the Data Protection Registrar. The address is Data Protection Registrar, Springfield House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AX.

Please note the eight data protection principles under the Data Protection Act (1998) (UK Only).

Registered organisations should:

1. Obtain and process personal data fairly and lawfully.
2. Hold data only for the purposes specified on the register entry.
3. Use the data only for the purposes, and disclose it only to the people, listed in the register entry.
4. Only hold data which is adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purpose for which it is held.
5. Ensure personal data is accurate and where necessary, kept up-to-date.
6. Hold data for no longer than is necessary.
7. Allow individuals access to information about them and, where appropriate, correct or erase it.
8. Take security measures to prevent unauthorised or accidental access to, alteration, disclosure or loss and destruction of information.