



Newsbrief...

SPRING 2012

News, updates and resources in Education, Safeguarding Trust and Children's Ministry

The Common Protocol and Independent Organisations

The Common Protocol is an agreed procedure for churches relating to independent organisations working with children and young people and regularly using church premises.

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

What is an independent organisation?

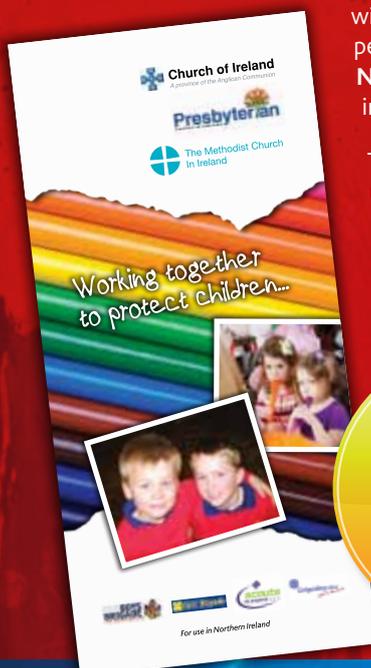
BB(NI) and GB(NI), although both national organisations, where they are placed within churches are an integral part of the churches' work with children and young people and are currently **NOT** considered to be independent organisations.

The Scout Association (NISC) and Girlguiding Ulster are also national organisations for young people but **ARE** fully independent.

This means that the church is responsible for recruiting, selecting and appointing (including vetting) all church based children's/youth leaders including leaders for **BB(NI) and GB(NI)** but excluding leaders for the **Scout Association (NISC) and Girlguiding Ulster**.

Leaders in BB and GB should receive training and follow the guidelines and procedures of Safeguarding Trust.

Leaders in Scouts and Guides should receive training from, and follow the guidelines and procedures, of their organisations.



See enclosed leaflet for full information...

AccessNI update...



In recent months the Board of Education has received a number of AccessNI Enhanced Disclosure Application forms on the now obsolete 9 page form. This form was replaced by the current 5 page form in July 2010. The new form can be downloaded from the Church of Ireland website, or directly from the AccessNI website. It can also be emailed to you, or a hard copy posted to you if you contact the Board of Education.

The Board of Education is the Registered Body with AccessNI for the Church of Ireland. **ALL** applications for AccessNI checks **MUST** be processed through the Board of Education. If forms are sent directly to AccessNI, they will be returned either to the parish or to the Board of Education.

Each AccessNI application form **MUST**

be accompanied by a completed and signed Validation form.

There is a Guide to completing an AccessNI Application form available on the Church of Ireland website or advice may be sought from the Board of Education.

It is a **LEGAL REQUIREMENT** that all new workers in 'regulated activity' must have a satisfactory AccessNI Enhanced Disclosure check **BEFORE** he/she commences in their position. But please remember that although it is a legal requirement, the AccessNI check is only the final step of a robust recruitment and selection procedure!

Some forms are still submitted to the Board of Education with errors



or omissions. AccessNI will not process such forms. This means that either Claire Geoghegan, AccessNI co-ordinator in the Board of Education, will return the forms to the parish(es) concerned, or AccessNI will return the forms to the Board of Education. Either way - this will create a delay in the check being completed.

Please see the enclosed new 'check list' for reference when completing forms.



Children & Youth Sleepover Guidance

Many charities and youth groups use church halls and similar places as overnight accommodation. If the sleepover is only for 1-3 nights then this should be fine but it's important to bear in mind that a church hall was not built with this activity in mind.

Before you make a decision on where a sleepover is to take place there are some security and safety issues that should be considered, preferably as part of your Risk Assessment process.



Issues to consider include:

- How secure are the premises?
- Is sleeping limited to ground floor only?
- Do the premises have emergency lighting?
- Are there annually maintained fire extinguishers positioned appropriately and in accessible locations?
- Do you have an established bedtime routine that you can use even away from your usual premises? For example, removing plugs from sockets, checking doors are locked etc?
- Do you have an evacuation plan designed around the physical capabilities of the children and other attendees? And have you communicated the plan to the people staying over?
- Are the emergency exits clearly marked and free from obstructions?
- Do the premises have a telephone or mobile phone signal?
- Are the toilet/washing facilities adequate for use as accommodation?
- Do you have first aiders and a complete first aid box on the premises?
- Do you know what the minimum adult/child supervision ratios are and can you ensure that you have it in place for each night?
- Are there separate sleepover rooms for girls and boys?
- Is there somewhere suitable for the Leaders or Organisers to sleep?
- Has written parental consent been obtained?

If you run through these and can answer each positively then review your child protection procedures again so you make sure all Leaders and Organisers understand their role and responsibilities. We know that sleepovers are special events for youngsters that they really enjoy, if you can ensure their safety these will be special events for all concerned to remember.

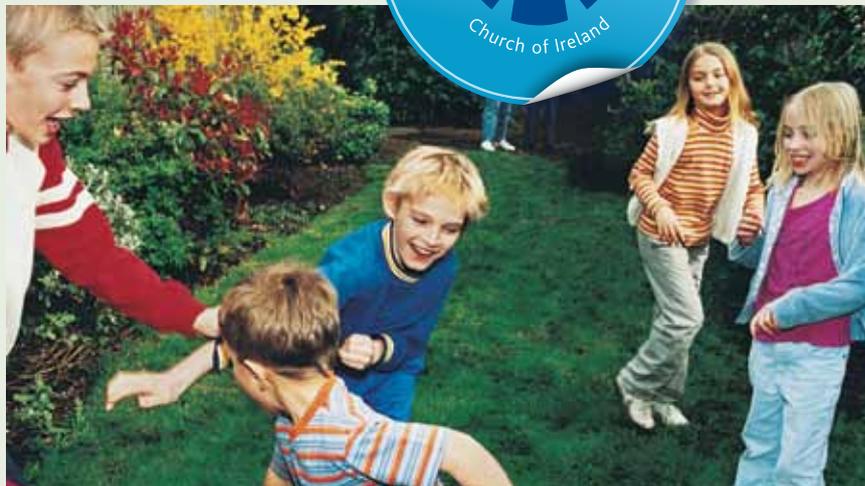
Article by Oval James (Insurance Brokers)

Concerns of a Child Protection Nature...



If a child protection concern or disclosure is brought to a panel member, the process is:

- The panel should be convened urgently to consider the report/disclosure
- The concern/disclosure should be recorded - Pro Forma - found in **Safeguarding Trust 9.2.11**
- No further investigation to be conducted by the panel
- WITHOUT DELAY - 1 panel member - designated on behalf of the panel - to contact the local Gateway Team and make the report **VERBALLY** to the duty social worker. This is called 'making a referral'
- Please see insert for Gateway Team and Out of Hours Emergency numbers!
- All details on the pro forma should be disclosed
- The name of the social worker taking the referral should be obtained and recorded
- Advise social worker that the Bishop and CPO will be informed of the referral
- Any advice or instructions from the social worker should be recorded and followed
- The Bishop and CPO should be informed as soon as possible about the referral - within 24 hours or next working day
- A confidential file should be created, recording all conversations and written reports



It is now the policy of Social Services that the person making the referral should tell the family that he/she has made a referral to Social Services. If a panel member, making a referral is told by the social worker to advise the family then this is what the panel member should do. When Social Services go to follow up the referral, the family will be told who made the referral.

All parents should be aware that the Church of Ireland has a child protection policy and that if there is a concern about the welfare of a child, there is a duty - legal as well as moral - to refer to Social Services. This is explained in the leaflet 'Safeguarding Trust Information for Parents and Guardians'.

However, it is recognised that this may be a difficult thing to do, and that not

everyone would be comfortable doing this. If this is the case and no one on the panel felt able to tell a family that a referral had been made to Social Services, then the referral could be made anonymously; although the details of the report may well identify the source if not the individual making the referral.

The CPO is available to provide support and guidance about any concerns.

If the concern involves a parish worker, the Bishop and CPO should be informed immediately. The worker should be removed from 'regulated activity' immediately, and should refrain from regulated activity until the investigations by the statutory agencies are concluded.

Depending on the outcome of the statutory agencies' investigations, there may need to be an internal review/ investigation before the worker can return to regulated activity.

N.B. Regulated activity is any activity which:

involves contact with children frequently, intensively and/or overnight. (Such activities include teaching, training, care, supervision, advice, treatment and transportation.)

The panel should liaise closely with the CPO and follow advice and guidelines given.



Building Blocks Children's Ministry Conference...

There was a packed programme for **Nick Harding, Children's Ministry Officer for the diocese of Southwell and Nottingham, who was the keynote speaker at the Building Blocks Children's Ministry Conference held in All Hallows College, Drumcondra on 19th November.**

Not only did he address two plenary sessions but also led two seminars on "Boys, God and the Church".

On the previous day, Nick led a morning seminar on All-age Worship for Intern Deacons in The Church of Ireland Theological Institute as part of their practical training programme. This was followed by a lunch time talk to the clergy of Dublin & Glendalough.

There was a record turn-out of participants in Dublin where 240 people attended the Conference from all over Ireland - from Kerry to Louth and from Sligo to Wexford, indicating a recognition that Children's Ministry is an essential element of the Church's mission and outreach. Over half of those attending came from over fifty different Church of Ireland parishes.

Nick Harding's keynote address "Be Encouraged" lived up to its title and all who attended were greatly encouraged and equipped not only by Nick's talks but also by the range of seminars that were on offer.

The previous week, Nick was also the keynote speaker for the Belfast Building Blocks Conference held in Orangefield Presbyterian Church. The Belfast conference attracted 160 participants with again over half of these coming from Church of Ireland parishes. This is the ninth year that the Conferences have been held to encourage and resource those involved in children's ministry from a range of Churches in Ireland and we look forward to 2012.



Nick Harding (centre) pictured with members of the Building Blocks (Dublin) organising committee



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