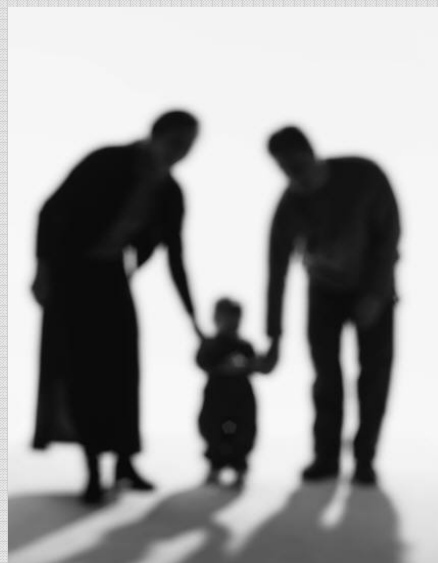




Christian Fellowship Church



**Child Protection Document
For Children and Young People**

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

Child Protection Policy for Children and Youth Work

At the outset of this booklet, written for the benefit of our Youth and Children's leaders, it is important to state how privileged we are as a congregation to have people among us who provide such a high standard of care and teaching for our children and young people. We appreciate the time and commitment, the effort and enthusiasm, and above all the love and care that our leaders -from baby crèche volunteers through to the Youth leaders, give to the children and young people. The intent of the information, which follows, is to help everyone working with the younger generations in the church to do so with confidence, aware that they are operating within programmes and with guidelines that ensure the best possible standards of safety and protection for both themselves, and the children.

Under legislation there are requirements about registration for voluntary groups working with children. This order - "Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order 2005" is legislation with the established aim of improving existing safeguards for vulnerable adults and children by preventing unsuitable people obtaining work, in any capacity, whether paid or unpaid. All organisations entrusted with the care of children and vulnerable adults need to adhere to this legislation to ensure best practice. Legally, these apply to anyone providing residential care, and to all groups who regularly have children under 12 years of age in their care for more than two hours a day.

In response to this legislation, the government published a booklet giving guidelines for voluntary organisations working with children -"Our Duty To Care" - which aims to help them bring their practices into line with the standards the Order lays down. This advice is for any group working with under 18 year olds.

At present churches are exempt from the registration process -though it may not always be so! However, the standards of care we offer to children and young people should be in the realms of excellence -we have a moral duty to think through and apply the principles the government authorities are laying down, and make sure our practices are effective and efficient, especially in protecting children from abuse. Putting these guidelines into practice will also ensure a high standard of protection for those working with children and youth in our church.

Young people and children are legally entitled to certain standards of care and protection, and the new Children's Order is going to make everyone, parents and children, more aware of their rights and responsibilities.

In this booklet we have formulated basic guidelines for groups working with youth and children in CFC to help us comply with the principles of good practice detailed by the authorities. It will also give some information to help us recognise signs of abuse, and guidelines on how to proceed if one suspects a child is suffering abuse.

INDEX

		Page No.
1.	PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE	3
2.	AIMS OF YOUTH AND CHILDRENS ORGANISATIONS OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH	4
3.	COMPLYING WITH STATEMENT OF AIMS	5
4.	PROTECTION GUIDELINES	6
5	GUIDELINES ON TRANSPORT	9
6	SAFETY ON CHURCH PREMISES	10
7.	DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE	11
8.	WHAT TO DO IF ABUSE IS SUSPECTED	13
9.	GUIDELINES FOR PRAYING WITH CHILDREN	14
10,	FORMS AND HOW TO USE THEM	15
11.	SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS	16

1. **PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE**

The following is a summary of the principles of good practice for the protection of children which the government have published.

All voluntary organisations working with children should...

- Promote the general welfare, health and full development of children and protect them from harm of all kinds.
- Recognise that children have rights as individuals and treat them with dignity and respect.
- Raise awareness about what children are entitled to be protected from.
- Adopt and consistently apply a thorough and clearly defined method of recruiting and selecting staff and volunteers.
- Plan the work of the organisation so as to minimise opportunities for children to suffer harm.
- Develop effective procedures in responding to accidents and complaints and to alleged or suspected incidents of abuse.
- Establish effective links with parents and other relevant organisations

2. GENERAL AIMS OF YOUTH AND CHILDRENS ORGANISATIONS OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

- To value each child and young person, recognising their individuality and seeking to develop their potential -spiritual, mental, physical and emotional - and to maximise their contribution to the group and to society at large.
- To encourage each child and young person to enter into, enjoy and grow in a relationship with Jesus Christ, experiencing personally His salvation by faith and acknowledging His Lordship in their day-to-day lives.
- To help children understand, receive and apply the Word of God to their lives, using methods appropriate to their age and development.
- To help each child find their place in the Body of Christ as a fully active member.
- To treat children and young people with dignity and respect, and to encourage them to do likewise in their relationship!» with each other.
- To endeavour to choose and train leaders whose contribution to the group will be positive and in keeping with the standards we promote as a church.
- To have each group formulate their own specific statement of aims and objectives, and make them known to all leaders, parents, children and young people.
- To use appropriate language with young people and children, and to encourage them to speak to each other in ways which build up dignity and mutual respect.
- To avoid and discourage put-downs.
- To have programmes which are age appropriate and well planned in advance.
- To have adequate leadership in terms of child/adult ratios.
- To ensure there is a contact address and telephone number on file *for* each child and young person.
- To be aware of the parents/guardians arrangements for the collecting of children/young people from church activities, and generally to maintain good communication with parents.

3. TO COMPLY WITH THIS STATEMENT OF AIMS EACH CHILDREN'S OR YOUTH GROUP NEEDS TO...

1. Keep an updated list of names, addresses and contact numbers of group members -including leaders.
2. Each leader should have a copy of the churches "Policy for Children's and Youth Work", and be familiar with its contents. They should know who to contact if neglect or abuse is suspected, and what basic disclosure procedures to follow.
3. Each group needs to formulate -in close association with the young people or children involved -a code of behaviour, a discipline policy, and an anti bullying policy.
4. Each group needs to plan its programme with safety in mind
5. Each group should use the appropriate forms for weekends, outings and accident reports.
6. Each leader should have completed a Volunteer Application Form which will be kept on file in the Church. All volunteers/workers will be asked for contact names for two referees who have knowledge of them.
7. Each group should formulate its own statement of aims and objectives. Each new leader and group member, and their parents, should be familiar with this.

4. Protection Guidelines

These can be divided into two areas -which do overlap at times.

- A Ways to protect children and young people from abuse
- B Ways to safeguard leaders

A WAYS TO PROTECT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM ABUSE

1. Choosing Leaders

Care should be taken when appointing children's and youth leaders. Everyone volunteering to work regularly with children's and youth groups should fill in the appropriate information and reference forms.

2. Education on Protection Issues

Leaders should be aware of the issues surrounding child abuse, protection and prevention, and be equipped to respond appropriately where such issues arise, or are suspected. They should know the guidelines for response set out later in this document.

3. Physical Contact

Some children enjoy and benefit from a degree of appropriate contact with leaders. While appropriate touch imports warmth, caring and security, it must be remembered that some children will not want physical contact and should never be put in the position where they have to accept it -this can be frightening for a child. Leaders should allow children to take the lead in matters of affectionate physical contact -I and should be very careful that the level or frequency of contact with any child should never be such as would be open to misinterpretation by an outsider looking on. Some children solicit inappropriate levels of physical contact, -either to gain affection or in rough play and this should be gently discouraged. "Horseplay" between children and adults should also be carefully monitored- it can be dangerous physically for both!

4. Banter and bullying

Banter is a regular feature of how children, and particularly older children, relate, but it can be very harmful. We would encourage all leaders to be very careful about levels of banter in a group -between leaders and leaders, leaders and children, or child to child. **Banter which makes any child feel put down, hurt, intimidated, embarrassed or pointed out as different, should be strongly discouraged.** It is utterly inconsistent with the aims and objectives of our groups. Where banter turns into taunting or name calling it comes into the realm of bullying, as does any physical pushing around or other victimisation of any particular child. It is good to formulate an agreed policy with the children to limit banter and outlaw bullying.

5. **Supervision levels**

Children should be supervised at all times by leaders. The younger the children, the more leaders should be present. A minimum of two leaders should be present for any group who meet and in mixed groups there should be males and females present in the room. Where children meet in more than one room, a leader should be present in each, and communicating doors left open if only one leader is available for each room. When smaller children need to make visits to the bathroom, they should go in small groups, and only in emergencies should a leader enter a cubicle with a child - generally wait outside.

6. **Safety**

Children should not be allowed to run in and out of church premises. Especially where younger children are concerned the outer doors need to be monitored by leaders at arrival time and departure time. Care should be taken that younger children (7 and under?) are properly picked up from groups by the parents or someone authorised by the parents.

Special care should be taken when going to other locations outside the main building -order; safety and close supervision are essential

B. WAYS TO SAFEGUARD LEADERS

1. **Good Planning**

All activities -normal group meetings, trips or weekends, should be well planned for and prepared, with safety of procedure and environment in mind, and adequate staffing ensured so that no leader is over stretched.

2. **Education**

All leaders should be familiar with what constitutes abusive behaviour towards a child -e.g. hurtful bantering and name calling, forceful physical contact, picking on a particular child, any holding or touching which makes the child uncomfortable or unhappy etc.

They should also be aware of signs that might indicate child abuse may be going on in other situations in the child's life, and what to do if they suspect such abuse. Senior leaders should be able to give clear guidelines on such matters, and every leader should be familiar with this booklet.

3. **Supervision Issues**

Leaders should try to ensure that as far as possible they are not left alone in a closed room with a child or young person. Organise activities so that two leaders - preferably one male and one female leader in mixed groups -are present. If a situation arises where you have to speak with one child, keep in view of the others -do not take to another room. If there are insufficient leaders to run the group safely, it is better to stop the group until new leaders are recruited. Every effort should be made where possible to work within the following ratio guidelines:

0-2 years	1 adult to 3 children
2-3 years	1 adult to 4 children
3-7 years	1 adult to 8 children
8 years+	2 adults for up to 20 children

4. **Transporting children**

Leaders should try not to put themselves in a position where they are regularly alone in a car with a child. Encourage parents to organise transport rotas among themselves. Where a leader regularly does a transport run, he or she should try to have another leader present, or at least never leave the same child off last every week, and should make sure parents and other leaders are aware of the arrangement. Children should be in rear seats and strapped in wherever possible. No overloading or travelling with inadequate insurance is acceptable. (See also sub section General Guidelines on Transport)

5. **Outside Activities**

When taking a group out on a special activity -e.g. swimming, check there are people in charge or on hand with adequate safety training, and that the establishment is covered in case of accident or injury.

On trips out, leaders should have a list of the children they are responsible for, should take responsibility for that group -know where they are at all times -and make sure they bring them all home! DO NOT attempt trips with inadequate leadership.

Inform parents of all trips out or special activities the group may undertake. Parental consent is necessary to take children under the age of 16 anywhere, even for a few hours. All final details of trips should be on an information sheet which should have a return slip for the parent to sign. (See sample forms).

6. **Keeping parents informed and involved where appropriate.**

Parents should be aware of the content of programmes -so planning in advance is essential. They should be invited to participate in events where for example there may be specific prayer for children. Each leader should be aware of the church's guidelines for praying with young people -(see end of document).

5. GENERAL GUIDELINES ON TRANSPORT

Coaches and Minibuses

Generally coaches are a safer and more effective way of transporting large groups than using leaders or parents' cars. A reputable company should be used and insurance cover checked. Overcrowding is dangerous and will invalidate insurance cover. By September 1996 all minibuses have by law to be fitted with seatbelts - each occupant, even the smaller children, will have to use a seat belt.

Cars

Voluntary workers can use cars to transport children and young people in connection with youth organisations **as long as hire or reward is not involved.**

Drivers should check that their passenger liability insurance is adequate, and note that overcrowding invalidates any insurance cover. Normal saloon cars are not insured for more than 5 people.

Be very careful to be on the church side of the road when leaving children off so as they are not tempted to run across the road. Try to have all young children exit cars on the pavement side.

Car Parking

Care should be taken at all times when driving close to church premises, and especially in and out of the car park. To avoid dangerous congestion it is a good idea to ask parents to park a little away from the church and bring young children in to the group on foot. Leaders who use the car park should try to arrive well before any children are around!

Exits from the building should not be obstructed by cars -especially the fire doors!

INSURANCE

Leaders should take responsibility to make sure insurance cover is adequate for special events -e.g. overnight stays, outings, weekends, skiing etc.

When any event outside church premises is being organised, leaders should check with the Church Office that the church insurance policy would cover those activities. Sometimes an extension of cover will be necessary.

Leaders should give all details to the church office administrator who will obtain for them written confirmation from the insurance company that any particular event, weekend, high risk activity etc. is covered.

6. SAFETY ON CHURCH PREMISES

These guidelines should be referred to especially when church premises are being used as accommodation for overnights or weekends.

- Security is important, both to safeguard the premises and its occupants.
- Outside doors should be locked when there is no one in that immediate area to prevent vandalism or theft, but keys should be positioned nearby so that doors can be opened in emergency situations.
- Leaders should have a full list of all people in the building overnight and have them posted at the main exits so that a roll call can be taken in case of emergency. An assembly point should also be agreed and made known to all.
- Where an area is being used for sleeping accommodation, there should be at least two separate routes leading from the sleeping accommodation and out of the building. Two doors leading into the same corridor is not acceptable.
- Exit routes and doors should be clearly indicated and pointed out to the group.
- As outside doors have to be locked for security purposes, it is preferable to use bolts, but if key locks are necessary it is important that keys be left in the lock or hung near the door overnight, so that doors can be opened in an emergency. Leaders should be aware of and able to operate the Fire Doors.
- While internal doors should be kept closed overnight to minimise the spread of fire and smoke, they should not be locked.
- Leaders should have access to a telephone in the building, or know where the nearest public phone is located. They should also have torches in case of a power failure.
- Leaders should know where fire alarms and appliances are located and how to operate them.
- Portable heating appliances and all cooking appliances should be turned off when people are sleeping.

7 **DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE**

Taken from " Co-operating to Protect Children" -the DHSS guide.

"Children may be abused by a parent, a sibling or other relative, a carer (e.g. foster parent) an acquaintance, or a stranger. The abuse may be the result of a direct act, or of a failure on the part of a parent or carer to act or to provide proper care, or both.

The abuse may take a number of forms, including

- **Neglect** -the actual or likely persistent or severe neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold or starvation, or extreme failure to carry out aspects of care resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development.
- **Physical abuse**
Actual or likely perpetrated physical injury to a child, or failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child.
- **Sexual abuse**
Actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or adolescent
- **Emotional abuse**
Actual or likely persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional and behavioural development of a child.

Who can abuse?

You can't tell by looking at a person whether they are an abuser -they don't appear any different from the rest of society, they come from all classes, all professions and races.

Strangers may sometimes carry out abuse of children, but it is more common that the abuser is known to the child, and in a position of trust and/or authority.

It is not only adults who abuse children -children may suffer abuse from other children and young people.

What are the signs of abuse?

Child abuse is very hard to diagnose, even for professionals, but if anyone has a concern about possible abuse, they should pass that concern on - following the guidelines mentioned later in this document, as sometimes it is the collection of a number of small pieces of information which may combine to give a picture of abuse.

- **Neglect**

Constant hunger, poor personal hygiene, constant tiredness, poor state of clothing, emaciation, untreated medical problems, no social relationships, compulsive scavenging, destructive tendencies.

- **Physical Abuse**

Unexplained recurrent injuries or burns, improbable excuses or refusal to explain injuries, wearing clothes to cover injuries even in hot weather, refusal to undress for gym or swimming, bald patches, chronic running away, fear of medical help or examination, self destructive tendencies, aggression towards others, fear of physical contact -shrinking back if touched, admitting that they are punished, but the punishment is excessive -e.g. beaten every night to "make them study", fear of suspected abuser being contacted

- **Sexual Abuse**

Being over affectionate or knowledgeable in a sexual way inappropriate to the child's age; medical problems such as chronic itching, pain in the genitals, venereal diseases, depression, self mutilation; suicide attempts, running away, overdoses, anorexia; regression to younger behaviour patterns such as thumb sucking or cuddly toy hugging; personality changes such as becoming insecure, clinging; sudden loss of appetite or compulsive eating; being isolated or withdrawn; inability to concentrate; lack of trust or fear of someone they know well, such as not wanting to be alone with a baby- sitter or child minder; starting to wet again; day or nightmares; become worried about undressing; suddenly drawing sexually explicit pictures; trying to be ultra good or perfect; over-reacting to criticism.

- **Emotional Abuse**

Delays in physical, mental and emotional development; sudden speech disorders; continual self deprecation -e.g. "I'm stupid, I'm ugly; over reaction to mistakes; extreme fear of new situations; inappropriate response to pain - "I deserve this"; neurotic behaviour -rocking, hair twisting, self mutilation; extremes of passivity or aggression.

8. WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT A CHILD IS BEING ABUSED

You should consult as soon as possible with the person ultimately responsible for the age group you are working with, and they should then contact the person designated by the church who has special responsibility for the care of children and young people. This individual will be known as **the named person**.

On no account should there be gossip on such matters -this is a very sensitive area and confidentiality is essential.

How to react if a child wants to talk to you about abuse

In our work we seek to create an atmosphere of trust, where children and young people know that they will be listened to and believed. This may encourage them to share their concerns, and they may take the opportunity to disclose matters which may amount to abuse.

- Accept what the child says, keeping calm and looking at the child directly
- Let them know you need to tell someone else -you cannot keep some things secret
- Reinforce that they are not to blame and that they are right to tell you never push for more information
- Be aware that the child may be under threat
- Let the child know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens.

What to do next

Do not panic! In most scenarios you will just have collected a small piece of information. It will be for others, with more training and experience, to evaluate this information. Over reaction can be extremely harmful to the child, the accused, the group, the authorities and yourself!

Your immediate responsibility is to contact the "named person" in your church - either directly or through your group leader. Do not do anything by yourself.

Following the correct procedure can be vital to the child's best interests.

A form should be filled in or notes made a.s.a.p. giving accurate details of what the child said, when, 'and to whom. (See Form in Appendix)

Only in a case where serious and recent physical or sexual abuse is talked of and you suspect the child is in immediate danger, and you cannot contact the named person, should you directly contact the local social services or police. Sexual abuse is a crime - where it may be possible to help situations of physical or emotional abuse or neglect in consultation with the family concerned, matters concerning sexual abuse must be dealt with differently. The "named person" in your church will know who to contact in the social services so that such allegations can be dealt with properly.

9. Guidelines for Praying with Children

In Christian Fellowship Church believe that in working with the children of the church we are not just "minding the children" but helping to equip the saints. Prayer ministry in the Body of Christ is important -we want to be free to pray for the children when appropriate in our groups and to encourage them to pray with each other. Please accept these guidelines not as a limit, but as part of fulfilling the Bible's requirement that "everything be done in a fitting and orderly way."

1. Make sure parents know that prayer -by the children, for the children and among the children, is part of your programme. If you are dealing with subjects where prayer ministry is definitely involved, e.g. the baptism of the Spirit, or spiritual gifts, parents should know this, and know that they are welcome to be there. They then have the option of keeping their children away that week if they don't feel it is appropriate for them.
2. Always pray in an open area with other children and leaders around.
3. Always have the child's permission to be specifically prayed for.
4. Have another leader with you when you pray for a child. It is also good to include one or two of the child's peers. This helps in the weighing up of any words or directions you might think you are receiving for the child.
5. Don't crowd the children when praying. Get down on their level -don't tower over them. It is often good to sit down on the floor together. Keep touch to a gentle touch of the hand on the child's head or shoulder.
6. Listen to what the child wants prayed for. If they have no specific needs or requests I simply ask the Holy Spirit to come and bless them. If you feel strongly that you have something specific you should pray, it is good to check that with the other leader present. If you are unsure about a prophecy or word of knowledge, quietly submit it to the other leader before you go ahead.
7. If you pray for a specific area, or if a leader or a child receives a word of knowledge, encouragement or prophecy, this should be written down so as the child can let their parents know (and remember themselves!)
8. Keep prayers simple and short, and generally keep prayer times short too.
9. If a child becomes distressed, consult with the leader in charge before continuing to pray with them. Discernment is important -the child may be being touched by the Spirit and responding with tears of repentance or joy and relief - or they may be feeling confused and afraid. If you are unsure, stop, and talk to the parents later.
10. Never allow any leader or child to get into anything like "deliverance" ministry - it is inappropriate in the context of a children's group.

10. FORMS AND HOW TO USE THEM

INFORMATION FORM FOR YOUTH AND CHILDRENS WORKERS

Every person wishing to work with children in Christian Fellowship Church should fill in this form. They should also be given the relevant information on the group they wish to work with, and a copy of our guidelines for youth and children's workers.

INFORMATION FORM FOR CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON

To be filled in by parent or guardian of the child (i.e. under 16 year old).

This form should be accompanied with a leaflet giving basic information about the group i.e. time and place, leader in charge, aims and objectives.

TRIP INFORMATION FORM

A form similar to this should be produced and sent to the parents/guardians for **any trip or outing** where the children are taken away from their usual meeting place, even if only for a few hours, or if they are to be involved in a **special event** (e.g. day long programme/overnight). **Make sure consent forms (tear off slip) are returned!**

HEALTH FORM

To be used whenever children will be away from their parents/guardians for more than 24 hours e.g. residential weeks or weekends. This form is confidential. It should be filled in by the child's parent/guardian, and returned to the group leader. The leader should make sure the forms are completed and returned for each child, that they are read through, notes taken, and the forms brought away with the group. A leader (preferably one with some first aid or medical training) should be made responsible for seeing that the various instructions are carried out, medicines taken etc. When taking groups of younger children it is usually best for medicines (other than asthma inhalers) to be taken into the care of a leader to avoid them becoming lost -or experimented with by other children!!

Remember that leaders should not dispense any medication -even Paracetamol- to children without their parent's permission!

ACCIDENT REPORT FORM

To be completed by leaders and witnesses in the event of any accident or injury. If an accident occurs where emergency treatment is necessary, take the child to the nearest casualty department (make sure you know where it is!) or local surgery. Contact the parents as soon as possible, and take the child's Health Form to the hospital/doctor with you. Try to have a leader with a first aid qualification on every residential trip. Fill in the accident report form as soon as possible.

REFERENCE FORM

To be used for any new worker joining the team. The referee should not be a relative, and should have known the person well for at least three years.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT FORM

To be completed whenever there is a complaint made, by another leader, by a child, or by a parent, about any person involved in the Children's or Youth work.

Summary of main points

- Children and young people are made in the image of God; consequently they are of inestimable value and should be treated with dignity and respect at all times.
- The care and protection of children and young people is of paramount importance. Child protection is the responsibility of all leaders and helpers.
- Children's and young people's complaints should be listened to, and where appropriate, investigated by the appropriate authorities.
- The designated people for child protection in our church are Paul Francis (Youth Pastor) and Owen Sweeney (Children's Pastor).
- Parents are essential partners in child protection matters; they should be informed immediately about any accident involving their child.
- The recommended practice and procedures should be adhered to in the best interests of the children and young people, the leaders/helpers and the parents. All leaders/helpers with substantial access to young people must be vetted.
- Youth/Children's Pastor or Elders must approve all appointments of leaders/helpers.
- All leaders/helpers are required to take part in initial and on-going child protection training.
- In the case of alleged abuse, the recommended procedures must be followed. The legal principle that the 'welfare of children is paramount' means that the consideration of confidentiality should not override the right of children and young people to be protected from harm. There are therefore some situations where confidentiality cannot be maintained.
- Accurate records of name, full address, date of birth and telephone number should be kept for each child attending our groups.
- Child protection issues should be considered at least annually by the leaders/helpers in each group.

Designated Contact People for Child Protection Issues:

Owen Sweeney
Children's Pastor
Christian Fellowship Church
10 Belmont Road
Belfast
BT4 2AN
Phone: 028 9067 1838 (Ext 849)

or

Paul Francis
Youth Pastor
Christian Fellowship Church
10 Belmont Road
Belfast
BT4 2AN
Phone: 028 9067 1838 (Ext 856)

