




2025



HOW SAFE IS YOUR CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH WORK?

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A checklist and guide for all those involved in children's and youth ministry.

This handy little booklet will run you through the most important things to get right when working with children and young people. You may like to tick the boxes as you work through it.

It's a starting point, not an exhaustive document. Please refer to your full safeguarding policy for more information and to develop this piece of work further.

Safeguarding

- ☐ Your church should have a safeguarding policy in place which is reviewed every year by the PCC / church council. Have you read it lately? You and all the other volunteers should read it annually. You can access the Safeguarding e-manual from the Church of England here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-e-manual>
- ☐ All those working with children and young people should be trained in safeguarding to include Basic Level and Foundation level. The person heading up / overseeing the group should also complete Leadership level or higher.
- ☐ All leaders should know the confidentiality policy as outlined in your safeguarding policy. How will you explain to the children and young people that you can't keep secrets if you think they are at risk?
- ☐ Always be on the look out for the signs and symptoms of abuse and report them to your Parish Safeguarding Adviser (PSA). (Signs and symptoms are outlined on the Church of England's website: <https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-e-manual/safeguarding-children-young-people-and-vulnerable-adults/section-3-domestic-abuse>)
- ☐ Your Safeguarding Policy and a picture of your Parish Safeguarding Adviser should be displayed publicly in your church.
- ☐ Do the children and young people know who to speak to if there is something they need to share?
- ☐ It is important that we build 'talking with our children and young people about how to keep safe' into our programmes. Create opportunities and build trusting relationships where sensitive information can be shared. Encourage leaders to 'Be Abuse Aware'.

Our Parish Safeguarding Adviser is Phone

First Aid

- ☐ Identify who are the First Aiders on duty every time you meet. At least one leader should also have a current recognised First Aid qualification provided by agencies such as the British Red Cross or St John's Ambulance Brigade. Some local authorities also offer these courses.

A copy of the certificate/s should be kept in the parish office. You need to ensure that your team members know what treatment you can offer, who is a certified First Aider, and at what point to ring 999.

You can check with St John Ambulance what might be essential in your First Aid kit¹. This should be checked annually and any out-of-date items replaced.

It is a requirement that an accident book is kept on all premises. Full details of any accidents must be entered in here. Since personal information needs to be carefully stored, it may be better to have some tear out sheets, that can then be delivered to the person (the church warden/minister) who stores all the forms. This is what needs to be recorded: Time and date, venue, who it happened to and what action was taken.

You will also need to be ready for: allergies, burns, cuts and grazes, trips, hygiene issues and burns from hot drinks (take great care about serving these, especially around small children).

If you are serving food at your groups it is advisable that you undertake a level 2 Food Hygiene and Safety course. This can be done online at a reasonable cost.²

Registration or Consent forms

- ☐ Parents and carers should complete an annual activity registration or consent form for their children to attend your group / activities. This should include any necessary medical information and emergency contact details. Many groups give these out in September for everyone to complete, but don't forget to give them out to new people throughout the year.

If you wish to take your group away from the church premises, or do any activities that might be described as dangerous or risky, you should seek additional consent from parents and carers, alongside doing a risk assessment, seeking permission from your PCC / church council and possibly seeking advice from your insurers. You may need extra insurance cover. You may decide not to do the activity if risks outweigh the benefits.

For overnight stays, special or hazardous activities it is essential that parents or carers complete a consent form and the details of the activity must be specified. No child should be allowed to participate in such activities if a consent form has not been completed and returned to the group leader.

Parents must be given full details of the activities / event, including:

- Aims and objectives of the activity
- Date and duration
- Details of the venue including arrangements for accommodation and supervision
- Travel arrangements
- Name of group leaders and contact numbers
- Information about financial, medical and insurance arrangements.

¹ <https://www.sja.org.uk/get-advice/i-need-to-know/what-to-put-in-a-first-aid-kit>

² <https://essentialfoodhygiene.co.uk/product/level-2-food-hygiene-safety> (1-2 hours, £12 with certificate)

Recruitment

☐ All leaders must be recruited by following the Safer Recruitment guidelines (Church of England: <https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/safeguarding-e-manual/safer-recruitment-and-people-management-guidance>)

1. Applicant is given a role description
2. Applicant must complete an application form and provide two references
3. Applicant must complete a Confidential Declaration form
4. Applicants should be interviewed (advisable to involve the group leader and the Safeguarding Representative)
5. Applicant should read the Safeguarding Policy and agree to follow it
6. A DBS check should be made through your organisation / church regardless of how many other DBS certificates the applicant may have with other organisations. DBS checks are made every three years.
7. Probationary period granted (3-6 months is advisable) where the volunteer is supervised carefully.
8. All volunteers should be given a small safeguarding advice card (available from the Diocese)

Young people aged under 18 are often a valuable source of assistance to children's work. However, they should not be asked to take formal responsibility for work with children. Helpers aged 16 and 17 should complete an application form, be interviewed and asked to sign an agreement to follow the Safeguarding Policy procedures. References should also be taken up. It is not the Church of England's policy to have 16 and 17 year olds complete a DBS check, and because confidential declarations are linked to DBS checks, these are not required either. There are alternative declaration forms that can be used when a role is not eligible for a DBS check and it may be worth thinking about one of those for young helpers. Registration and 17 year olds should never be solely responsible for a group or crèche and should always be supervised and supported by an adult. Once they reach 18 they should be treated as adults and asked to go through the adult recruitment procedure including applying for a DBS disclosure.

Observe an appropriate age-gap: A five-year age-gap between children and those working with them is highly advisable. This may not always be possible with, for instance, trainee youth-workers, but in that instance the group should be led by other adults who are at least five years older than the young people in the group. For young helpers this should also apply; a 17 year-old helping in the children's work should help with those 12 years old or younger. ³

Registers

☐ Registers should be kept for all groups that parents and carers are not present for and should include a record of leaders in attendance. You should include information about whether children or young people are allowed to go home alone, or if they are always to be collected. Registers should also include children's and young people's emergency contact information and medical information and should be stored securely and kept indefinitely. Some churches use functions within ChurchSuite or other apps to register the attendance of their children and young people.

³ https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/safer-environment-and-activities-oct19_0.pdf

Staffing Ratios

- ☐ There should be a minimum of two adults for each group. Those under the age of 18 should not be counted in the requirement of the first two adults, but if they are 16 or over may count towards any further numbers of supervisors needed. With groups of mixed gender there should be both male and female workers, and it is recommended that wherever possible one of the leaders should be female.

The NSPCC suggests the following standard ratios for the supervision of children for indoor activities (with a minimum of 2 leaders):

Age Group	Staff	Children
0-2 years	1 for every	3
2-3 years	1 for every	4
4-8 years	1 for every	6
9-12 years	1 for every	8
12-13 years	1 for the first	10 children and then 1 for each additional 12.

However, on no account should an adult be left by themselves with any age group. Staffing ratios with all age groups should always take into account the need and nature of the group.⁴

1 to 1 meetings

- ☐ Meeting up with young people (over the age of 11) in a 1 to 1 setting is a helpful way to deepen conversations and often helps young people talk more openly and honestly. It is important to gain parental consent for this, stating where you will be meeting the young person, for how long at a time (up to 1 hour is recommended), and what you intend to talk about (generally). Always meet in a public space (cafe, coffee shop, restaurant, park) where you are visible to others.

It is advisable to inform other team members or your supervisor of where and when you are meeting up and with whom. It is important to write basic details of these meetings, including any issues of concern. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, and any safeguarding issues (including disclosures) should be handled quickly and in line with safeguarding training.

Risk Assessments

- ☐ Risk Assessments should be completed for each group and venue that is used. One risk assessment can cover a regular group and venue for as long as the risks for activities and venue do not change. It is advisable to revisit your risk assessments each term to ensure there are no new risks.

An additional risk assessment should be undertaken for special sessions (off site, higher risk activities etc). Your PCC / church council should approve all risk assessments and mitigations before the session takes place. This is a requirement for your insurance. You can find a risk assessment template here: https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2018-11/CCB_Example-of-Risk-Assessment-Form.pdf

⁴ <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/briefings/recommended-adult-child-ratios-working-with-children>

Supervision

- ☐ It's really important to have effective supervision in place. Who supervises you, and who supervises your team? Put in regular supervision meetings where questions can be asked, and support needs raised. Training needs may be identified or behaviour issues addressed.

Equal Opportunities Policy

- ☐ Ensure everyone is welcome to your groups and that you are able to cater for additional needs that some young people or children may have. Write a statement that shows your commitment to this which all your leaders agree to. An example can be found here: <https://thirtyoneeight.org/dbs-service/register-with-us/england-wales/before-you-register/model-equal-opportunities-statement/>

Disabilities and Additional Needs

- ☐ Assess what changes should be introduced to ensure that those with disabilities or additional needs have access to and are included in your activities. Consider how you could work with parents and carers to understand children's needs more fully. Are there changes that could be made to your venue? Is there some training your team could access?

A great resource on working with young people with additional needs can be found here: <https://gbeuropeprojects.jimdofree.com/resources>

The Boys Brigade has produced an additional needs booklet here: https://boys-brigade.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Additional-Needs-book_NB23.5.21-_spread.pdf

Insurance

- ☐ Most churches are insured by Ecclesiastical Insurance, but you should ask your church leadership to see the policy. Your insurance is only valid if the PCC church council has approved the activity, and it is classed as 'normal activity'. As long as your group falls within the definition of 'normal activity', it doesn't need to be approved every time.

If you plan to do something different, or away from church buildings, a trip somewhere, or a residential or overseas trip - you should check with Ecclesiastical what extra cover you may require and gain PCC / church council approval. Your PCC / church council should only approve things if you have followed all the safeguarding and safe practice guidelines.

Social Media

- ☐ General safeguarding principles apply online as they do offline. If using Facebook, Instagram or other forms of social media to contact young people, it is advisable to have a 'work' profile that your line manager or supervisor has access to. For most platforms the recommended age is 13. Be careful not to encourage underage usage of these platforms, even with parental consent.

It is advisable not to 'private message' young people, but use group conversations and pages to communicate. You should ask parents or carers permission to communicate to young people in this way (this could be included in your annual consent form). It is also advisable not to use social media or texting late at night or to talk about sensitive issues online, instead arrange to talk face to face. Social media is best used for information giving (i.e. as reminders of when groups are happening, to publicise events or sending out consent forms). Consider including parents or carers in these groups. (Please see 'Social Media Guidelines for Youth Ministry' policy)

Mobile Phones

☐ Care should be taken with how you use your personal mobile phone in children's or youth ministry. If possible, use a 'work' phone. You may wish to provide your phone number to parents or carers, but direct, private communication with young people should be avoided, or treated with care. This would be comparable to meeting a young person in private. As you know, doors should be left open, or you would meet a young person in a public place (cafe / coffee shop). Use group texts, and again, seek parents / carers permission to communicate with their child via mobile phone. This applies to texting and calling. It is good practice to keep any calling or texting to daytime, certainly not between 10pm and 7am.

Photos

☐ You need to get permission (now enforced and more detailed under the GDPR rules) to take and use photos of children. For children under 16, parental / carer consent should be obtained. For children over 13, you should also seek their personal permission to use their photo. You must be specific about how the photo will be used, and should not be used if consent is not freely and specifically given. You may have permission to use a picture on social media to show what happened at an event, but you must not use the same picture for another purpose without going back and getting further consent. Be sure to state clearly where the pictures will be stored, for how long, who will have access to them, alongside how they will be used. Parents / carers and children over 13 have the right to ask you to erase pictures of them unless you have a legitimate reason to keep them.

Group debriefs

☐ It's a really healthy practice to debrief with your team after each session / group. When you debrief a session, ask what went well, and what could be improved. Encourage everyone in your team to contribute and to speak up when they see something that concerns them, either about a child, young person or other leaders. Create a culture of accountability in your team. Brief notes should be taken and kept for reference. If there are any safeguarding issues to report, these notes should be taken carefully and used to inform your safeguarding representative. It is important to report concerning behaviour immediately. It may be necessary to speak to a more senior safeguarding officer if you feel your concerns are not being handled appropriately.

Transport issues

☐ Children and young people should not be transported in a leaders' private car without the prior consent of their parents or carers. This also applies to formally arranged lifts to and from a church activity. There should be a non-driving adult escort as well as the driver. If in an emergency a driver has to transport one child on his or her own the child must sit in the back of the car and parents / carers informed.

All those who drive children on church-organised activities should ideally be over 25 and have held a full driving licence for two years and must ensure that they have adequate insurance before offering to transport anyone. Cars should be roadworthy and seatbelts and suitable car seats or booster seats should be used where appropriate.

Any driver who has an "unspent" conviction for any serious road traffic offence, such as drink driving, dangerous driving or racing on a public highway should not transport children on behalf of the church. Any driver who has an endorsement of 6 points or more on their licence should inform the group leader and the safeguarding children representative so a decision can be made about their suitability for transporting children.

Drivers who are not safely recruited children's leaders should be recruited for the task through the normal recruitment process, including a DBS check.

Use of a minibus or coach

Many groups rely on the use of a minibus for transporting children and young people. The guidelines below should be used in addition to the above guidance for transport.

- Drivers of a minibus must ensure that they are licensed to do so. The European Directive requires most drivers to take a test before they can drive a minibus with more than eight passengers, other than one used purely for social or voluntary purposes.
- Adequate insurance cover must be arranged for the driver, passengers and the vehicle.
- You must be satisfied that the vehicle documentation is up to date and the vehicle is safe to drive. The minibus must have forward facing seats and three point diagonal seat belts throughout.
- The leader should have a list of the names and addresses of those you are transporting both on their person and a copy left behind with another responsible person. These details should include the parental / carer consent forms.
- The vehicle should be covered by breakdown cover and access to a mobile phone is essential.
- Workers and helpers should sit among the group and not all together. If noise or behaviour appears to be getting out of control, stop the vehicle until calm is restored.

Sleepovers

☐ A consent form must be completed outlining all the details of the sleepover. Space to include any medical or dietary information should be provided, alongside emergency contact information. Always have separate sleeping arrangements for leaders and young people, and ensure you have adequate toilet facilities. (Please check the full safeguarding policy for more details)

Physical Contact

☐ Within the world of working with children there is a concern about touch. While it is necessary to keep children safe, this need not involve keeping the child at arm's length. Such an approach can be neglectful of children's needs and demoralising to workers. However, children need to be protected from inappropriate touch.

Suggested guidelines for physical contact:

- **Always** ask permission.
- Be mindful of your body position.
- Keep everything public. A hug in the context of a group or side-hug is very different from a hug behind closed doors.
- Touch should be in response to a child's needs and not related to the worker's needs. It should be age appropriate, welcome and generally initiated by the child, not the worker.
- Avoid any physical contact that is or could be construed as inappropriate, sexual and/or abusive/offensive.
- Allow the child to determine the degree of physical contact with others except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. when they need medical attention). Discourage over-clingy children from excessive physical contact.

In addition:

- You can allow people you support to give you brief hugs if you feel comfortable with this.
- You can allow people you support to hold hands or link arms with you to help with travel and stability.
- You should discourage people you support from touching your face. You can offer your hand instead.
- You should discourage people you support from sitting on your lap. You can offer to sit side by side.
- You should avoid using touch if the person you support is very distressed and is unlikely to tolerate it.
- Team members should take responsibility for monitoring one another in the area of physical contact. They should be free to challenge a colleague constructively if necessary. This issue should form a part of any review of children's activity.
- Concerns about inappropriate touch or possible abuse should always be reported in accordance with the Allegations Policy.

Unaccompanied Children

☐ Sometimes children may attend worship or children's groups apparently without the knowledge of their parents. No hard and fast guidelines can be given, as each situation is different, but the following advice may assist:

- Establish whether the child attends with their parents' knowledge, or at least without their parents' objections.
- Establish their full name, address and contact details. Include them on the register. Provide information about the group for the child to take home.
- Seek to obtain parental consent to the child's involvement, preferably by direct contact with the parent rather than by using the child as an intermediary.
- Bear in mind the child may have some personal or family difficulty which they may not wish to disclose, which may require sensitive handling.

- Do not include the child on trips away from the usual place of meeting without explicit written parental consent.
- If the child stops attending after having attended frequently, it may be appropriate to undertake some level of outreach, but this should be done very carefully and only after discussion with group leaders and the clergy.

Meeting in someone's home

☐ It is recommended that children and young people's activities take place in church buildings to avoid additional risks of home based-ministry. If however it is absolutely essential to run such a group within a home then a full risk assessment is necessary alongside a check of the church insurance to ensure the activity is covered, appropriate ratios of leaders to children and all leaders are 'safely recruited' as well as the home based DBS check. The following points add clarification.

- Home-based youth groups are responsible to the parent body / PCC / church council like any other group.
- Recruitment and staffing should follow the usual guidelines (a minimum of 2 adult leaders).
- Check you have the necessary insurance cover with the insurance provider (probably Ecclesiastical) and take additional cover if necessary.
- Registers, contact details and parental / carer consent for attendance and group activities should be kept as with any area of children's work.
- The safeguarding representative should be informed about the group and be able to include it in their usual monitoring, including the report to the PCC / church council.
- Supervision of group leaders is essential and should be offered regularly: this should involve, on at least an annual basis, a discussion with the safeguarding representative.
- Ensure the home environment is fit for purpose and free from hazards. A risk assessment should be carried out as standard practice. Consider pet allergies, suitable furniture, toilet facilities and cleanliness.
- A youth group or Confirmation class run from home may be necessary in some contexts of ministry. This is an example of 'home-based regulated activity with children'. If such an activity is considered the answer to question 5 in the self-declaration will be yes and the role will be deemed 'home-based'. It is wise to inform your Diocesan Safeguarding Officer of any home-based ministry you engage in.