

Guidelines for Good Practice

When Working with Children/Young People

In Parishes, Benefices, Local Ministry Groups and Deaneries

INTRODUCTION

All who work with children and young people have a crucial role to play in helping to shape aspects of their lives so it may enhance their future development. It is a great privilege and a unique opportunity to be able to interact with children and young people in ways that are both affirming and inspiring. This guidance has been produced to help those who work with children and young people in parishes, benefices, LMGs and deaneries, paid or voluntary, to establish safe and responsive environments which help to safeguard children and young people. It may also help to reduce the risk of adults being falsely accused of improper or unprofessional conduct. If we are to be a part of enabling children and young people to develop, reach their full potential and to, 'have life, life in all its fullness" (John 10: 10) then we need to do it as safely as we possibly can.

In *Working together to safeguard children, Every Child Matters (2006)*, the Government sets out proposals for reforming and reshaping the delivery of services for children, young people and their families in the future. The proposals in *Every Child Matters* build on existing measures to ensure that we safeguard all children and young people, especially those at risk. There are five clear, measurable outcomes that underpin all future work with children and young people. These present the faith sector with a challenge and opportunity to engage with the wider agenda for children, young people and their families.

- **Being healthy:** enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle
- **Staying safe:** being protected from harm and neglect
- **Enjoying and Achieving:** getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood
- **Making a Positive Contribution:** being involved with the community and not engaging in anti-social or offending behavior
- **Economic wellbeing:** not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life

Every Child Matters, can be downloaded on line at www.dfes.gov.uk/everychildmatters

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Careful planning and preparation of activities/sessions will help to ensure that leaders and helpers will be clearer about their roles and responsibilities.

Careful planning and preparation will help to ensure that:

- Adequate resources/equipment for activities can be obtained (where required)
- All relevant permissions can be obtained and communicated to children/young people, parents/carers, PCC and other governing bodies etc
- Risks and safety factors can be considered and risk assessment forms filled in and recorded (see advice on five steps to risk assessment www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf)
- Children with differing abilities or special needs/requirements can be identified and given further consideration. This may require looking at issues relating to access, communication and the types of resources being used
- Consideration can be given to children/young people regardless of race, gender, ability, sexuality or religious beliefs
- Special dietary requirements can be considered and appropriately catered for
- Children/young people are regularly consulted about the services/activities that affect them or are provided for them. This will encourage greater participation

THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND SAFETY AND USE OF VEHICLES

- It is vital that the environments where work is carried out with children/young people are safe, provide adequate facilities and are as accessible as possible
- Premises should be well maintained and comply with Health and Safety standard, this will include carrying out a risk inspection of the building, to identify potential hazards and how you are going to reduce the risk (see advice on five steps to risk assessment www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf)
- Maintenance should not be carried out during a session unless in a time of emergency i.e. clearing up broken glass, a spillage of liquid or when an electricity switch is tripped. When carrying out emergency maintenance always ensure that the immediate area around the hazard is safe and clear of children/young people. If the hazard cannot be dealt with, make the area safe around the hazard for the rest of the session, then at the first opportunity inform the relevant person who is responsible for the building and its maintenance
- Where work is carried out with children/young people there should ideally be access to toilet facilities
- Food preparation should comply with food and hygiene standards (for further information www.food.gov.uk)
- There should be access to a first aid kit and the contents should be regularly checked. If any items are used or out of date they will need to be replaced, a record of any incident/accidents should also be recorded
- It is recommended that at least one member of staff should know how to administer basic first aid
- Staff need to know where the nearest telephone is for emergencies (mobiles don't always have a signal)
- Staff should know where any fire extinguishers are kept and on what type of fire they can be used (types of fire extinguishers: water, powder, foam, carbon dioxide)
- Everyone should know where the emergency exits are and where the emergency assembly point is

- Emergency exits must be clearly marked, they also need to be kept clear and accessible at all times
- Electrical equipment used during activities must be safe and in good working order. It is advised that all electrical equipment is PAT (Portable Appliance Tested) some local electricians may be able to provide this service
- There must be adequate insurance cover for ALL on site and off site activities
- Activities should also be agreed with the PCC
- Where private cars are used to transport children and young people, drivers must ensure that the vehicles are road worthy; there is adequate insurance (with written confirmation); the maximum capacity is not being exceeded; seat belts are used at all times and the correct car seats are used for children who require them
- Where mini-buses are used to transport children and young people, the above recommendations apply. Drivers must also ensure that luggage is stored safely and securely and that they have undergone relevant driver training (for further information see www.rospa.com/roadsafety/info/minibus_code.pdf or www.uk-roadsafety.co.uk/midas.htm)
- Transport should only be provided when there are two adults available who have completed safe recruitment procedures, and where consent from parents/guardians has been obtained
- It is inappropriate for adults to regularly offer lifts to children/young people to and from activities unless agreed with parents
- Where possible it is advised that youth/children's groups are run in halls, churches or rooms connected with the church. If a private house is used on a regular basis, there need to be clear boundaries and rules and the PCC need to be informed

Additional information for off site activities and running a residential

Special care should be taken when organizing trips and overnight stays. All must follow the safety rules and regulations stated by any activities or residential centers being visited.

- When running a residential, leaders should always leave contact details with all parents/guardians in case of an emergency. A full list of participants and contact details should also be left with an appropriate person (not attending the residential) who can be a contact point in an emergency
- Those running off site activities should ideally visit facilities or residential centers prior to the activity taking place to check out the suitability, accessibility and safety. A risk assessment can then be carried out. This is more relevant when using a facility for the first time
- When running a residential activity special care must be given to sleeping arrangements (i.e. separate male/female/staff sleeping facilities)

IMPORTANT INFORMATION, PERMISSIONS AND CONSENT

Up to date relevant information, and obtaining consent is a vital part of safeguarding children and young people.

- A register of up-to-date information and contact details must be kept of the children/young people you work with. It is also recommended that up-to-date information and contact details of the staff is also kept. All must be stored safely
- It is good practice to keep an incident/accident book where incidents or accidents can be recorded for future reference if required
- For any activities away from the normal meeting place, ensure that parents/guardians know where the group is going and that they have signed and returned the relevant consent forms (see standard consent form in this document)

- Consent will also need to be obtained if leaders are going to take photographs or videos of children/young people, especially if they are for public viewing

SAFE RATIOS AND GENDER REPRESENTATION

There should always be a minimum of two adult leaders at every session, ideally one male and one female. However it is recognised that this is not always possible. The table below is in line with Ofsted recommendations. Additional leaders must be present for activities away from the normal meeting place or on a residential.

| Age of children / young people | Maximum group size with TWO ADULT leaders | ADDITIONAL adults required |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 0 – 2 years | 4 | There needs to be one additional adult for every additional two children |
| 2 – 3 years | 8 | There needs to be one additional adult for every additional four children |
| 3 – 8 years | 16 | There needs to be one additional adult for every additional eight children |
| Over 8 years | 20 | There needs to be one additional adult for every additional 12 children/young people |

LEADERS, VOLUNTEERS AND HELPERS

Much of the youth and children’s work that happens in the faith sector is run by a committed group of volunteers therefore we must ensure that:

- Inexperienced leaders/workers/volunteers and young volunteers will benefit from clear guidance and supervision
- All who work with children/ young people need to think and act carefully to avoid situations which could lead to difficulties, embarrassing situations, accusations or temptations
- All who work with children/young people should be encouraged to participate in regular training
- Young volunteers (under the age of 18) should never be left on their own to run a group. Young volunteers can sign a three-way contract relating to their volunteering (see appendix in Safe Recruitment), they can also benefit from gaining accreditation (for further information on accreditation contact Somerset Youth Volunteering Network www.somersetyouth.org.uk or www.vinspired.com)
- Churches need to be careful when advertising for volunteers, it is better to approach potential volunteers personally, rather than having open appeals

CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Ensure all paid workers and adult volunteers have followed/completed the safe recruitment procedures and have obtained a clear enhanced CRB disclosure before working with young people
- Ensure all who work with children/young people know what to do in the case of suspected or alleged abuse
- Respect confidentiality but never promise to keep secrets especially if a young person is at harm or risk of being harmed

- All who work with children/young people are responsible for their own actions and behavior and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions
- All who work with children/young people should work and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way and should continually monitor and review their practice (for more details on child protection see the Diocesan Safeguarding Policy)

PARTICIPATION AND A POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR STRATEGY

- Participation helps to create a greater sense of ownership and can positively effect the engagement and behaviour in any youth/children's club. If young people are actively involved or able to have their say about the provision/services that affect them, it can also create pathways to those young people becoming volunteers
- Children and young people should also be encouraged to get involved in councils, forums, committees, PCCs and management structures, this can enrich the provision and how it is run
- A positive behaviour strategy is to negotiate rules and consequences with the children/young people; this should be done alongside the staff as it will act as a two way agreement. Rules must be shaped to also reflect policy
- Clear rules, consequences and boundaries help children/ young people and staff to know where they stand. Staff must be consistent when dealing with rules and consequences
- Where possible, try not to discipline children/ young people in front of others it can sometime be more effective to use time out or quiet words when dealing with disruptive children/young people. Non-directive humor can sometimes help to diffuse situations in times of conflict
- Be careful not to challenge conflict with conflict as it can make things worse or even ignite a situation
- If you have to exclude a child/young person from the group, make sure they and a parent/guardian knows why and for how long. It is advised that excluded children/ young people are offered an appropriate route to re-join the group
- Consider allocating specific roles to staff in preparation for times of conflict/emergencies (this may help staff to know what is required from them in these types of situation)
- Be very careful not to undermine other team members as it can be demoralising and destructive to the team
- Staff should not use the time during a session to catch up with other staff. It is ok to chat, but staff must be mindful and alert to what is happening with the children/ young people during the session
- Effective communication with the team, parents and the children/young people always pays dividends (remember that not all communication is verbal)
- If things become unsafe or unmanageable the leaders may need time out to reflect. It can sometimes be positive to evaluate and change direction of the group if it is required. It is good practice to involve young people in this process
- A simple yet golden rule in any youth/children's club is "If it is not safe, it is not going to happen". Programmes, participation, fun, learning and creativity are all vital aspect of our work with children and young people, however safety is paramount

PHYSICAL CONTACT, TOUCH, INTERVENTION/RESTRAINT, COMFORTING A DISTRESSED CHILD/YOUNG PERSON

- A no touch approach for adults who work with children/young people is often impractical. Every child/young person is different and every situation is unique therefore adult leaders should maintain self awareness of the dynamic of each situation and judge what is appropriate based on the needs of the individual child/young person. Any such contact will need to be age and gender appropriate and of limited duration. Where a child/young person seeks out or initiates physical contact with an adult leader, the situation should be handled with sensitivity and must never be exploited. Physical contact should never be secretive or for the gratification of the adult
- Physical intervention should, where possible be avoided. However there are occasions when the use of physical intervention is appropriate in order to control or prevent a potentially dangerous or harmful situation. The scale of any such intervention must be proportionate to the behaviour and the nature of the harm they may cause. The minimum necessary force should be used

BULLYING AND SPIRITUAL ABUSE

Bullying is any behaviour that is deliberately intended to hurt, threaten or frighten another person or group of people. It may include physical attacks, swearing and insulting comments, or deliberately leaving someone out of things. We are also now seeing an increase in cyber bullying or bullying using mobile technology.

- Bullying of any kind is not acceptable, whether it is aimed at children, young people or adults. For further help, information, resources or advice see www.childline.org.uk/extra/bullyingindex.asp
www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk

Spiritual abuse is another form of bullying and is also not acceptable as it can seriously effect the development of children/young. This is a good definition of spiritual abuse taken from www.spiritualabuse.org/introduction.html

“Just as emotional abuse affects one emotionally, while physical abuse inflicts pain and bodily injury on its victim, spiritual abuse affects one spiritually. It is the result of a spiritual leader or system that tries to control, manipulate, or dominate a person. This control is often in the form of fear. This is considered a major factor in mind control or thought reform. There are those who feel the latter comes into play in cases such as these, while others feel the thinking is in error. No matter where one stands, it does not lessen the affects of spiritual abuse”.

YOUTH WORK AND THE INTERNET

If the youth/children’s group run by your church uses the internet as part of the work, there should be a policy and clear guidelines on how it is to be used and there should always be adult supervision. (for an example of an internet policy see www.tilehurstjuniorclub.co.uk/documents/Internet_Policy.pdf)