

Section 2

Promoting safer practice with children and young people

The following is guidance specific to children and young people. This section is in addition to the “*Promoting safer practice in parishes and ministry areas*” referred to in Section 1.

There are many activities within the church where young people are involved in activities that are not solely provided for young people and are not necessarily led by individuals who have training in working with children and young people. This might include children and young people being involved in choirs, bell-ringing or where young people act as servers in the church. Anyone involved in any activity within the Church in Wales, where that activity brings them into contact with children and young people, should abide by the following principles.

Principles of good practice

All those working with children and young people should:

- ensure familiarity with these policies and procedures;
- set a positive example for others to follow;
- treat each child/young person with dignity and respect;
- be respectful of diversity and seek to promote equality for all young people, regardless of age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender identity;
- empower children to safeguard themselves by listening to them, giving them choices, believing them and giving them relevant advice and information (as befitting their age and understanding). Always be mindful of the language used, tone of voice, and body language;
- use touch appropriately and respect a child’s boundaries. Touch can be a way of communicating affection, comfort and reassurance. It should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child or young person, rather than the worker. It should be related to the child, young person’s needs, not the worker’s. Physical contact, where it occurs, should be kept public. A hug in the context of a group is different from a hug behind closed doors;
- be open and transparent as a team. Team members should monitor one another in the area of behaviour or physical contact. They should be free to help each other by constructively challenging anything which could be misunderstood or misconstrued;
- encourage others to appropriately challenge attitudes or behaviour they do not like;
- be mindful of children’s safety at all times but also be mindful of the worker’s safety to protect themselves from allegations. Behaviour should be open, transparent and accountable. Be aware that however well-intentioned someone’s actions are they may be misinterpreted by others;
- learn how to control and discipline children without resorting to corporal punishment. **Never** smack or hit a child and do not shout. Discipline and control should be managed by changing voice tone, referring disciplinary issues with individual children to their parents / carers and asking for additional support if necessary;

- get to know the children and find out what works for them as individuals and as a group. Make age appropriate group agreements (ground rules) with the children and young people on what is acceptable behaviour (e.g. no hitting, shouting, name calling etc.) which can be reviewed regularly together. Abusive peer activities e.g. bullying must not be tolerated;
- agree some basic guidelines for each activity so that everyone is behaving in a consistent way and expectations are clear. Make sure these are shared and understood by volunteers, new workers, parents and children;
- never work alone with a child or a group. In church premises, this could mean leaving doors open, or arranging for two groups to undertake activities in the same room. This enables workers to support each other and remain accountable to each other as a team;
- respect the privacy of children but never promise to keep secrets and generally do not enter into private or intimate conversations with children and young people. Offering appropriate care and support is important so, in listening to a young person's problem or offering advice, care should be taken in selecting an appropriate location and setting for such a discussion. Where possible, other leaders should be made aware of the meeting and other people should be around. Avoid situations within a relationship of trust which could compromise that relationship;
- not initiate or allow games or use of equipment which involves significant physical contact between adults and children or which could be seen as sexually provocative;
- not make or allow suggestive sexual remarks, or banter, to, or about any individual and they should avoid being drawn into a situation which allows or encourages a young person to seek attention in a manner that is sexual or overly physical;
- seek advice and deal appropriately with attention seeking behaviour displayed by children or young people e.g. tantrums and crushes;
- not invite children or young people into their own homes unless accompanied by a parent or guardian;
- avoid entering a child's home if a parent or carer is absent unless the child is at risk of harm if they do not do so;
- not transport a child/young person without a chaperone. Workers should ensure that another leader/helper accompanies them in the vehicle. If circumstances dictate that a child/young person must be transported alone, other leaders/helpers must be made aware of what is happening, and the child must travel in the rear seat of the vehicle;
- be careful of the use of social media and mobile phones with children and young people See Section 8 for further guidance;
- never trivialise abuse. Take any allegation or concern about abuse seriously. Careful notes should be written of what is seen or heard and it should be reported straight away. Recognise, record, report; never be afraid to ask for help and advice from leaders or more experienced staff. The Provincial Safeguarding Officers are available to give consultation and advice and should be contacted.

Participating in activities

The following provides guidance on good practice when working with children and young people. Requirements, such as those relating to adult/child ratios are set out for reference. Formal approval for the activities planned should be sought where appropriate (Form: 6 Application for Approval of Activities). A register of attendance (Form 8: Session Record) at the club or activity should be maintained, together with a register of workers and volunteers at each session. Parents/carers should be kept informed of the nature of activities.

Supervision of children/young people

The ratios below are those that are required by the Church in Wales and are in line with the recommended standards issued for day care by the Welsh Government.

- 1 adult to 3 children from birth to 2nd birthday
- 1 adult to 4 children aged 2 years
- 1 adult to 8 children aged 3-7 years.
- 1 adult to 10 children aged 8-12 years.

The above are the minimum requirements and the ratios should be increased where circumstances require; for example, to offer appropriate support to a child with additional needs. Whenever possible activities should be supervised by a minimum of two adults. During the supervision period children and young people should never be left unattended.

The Church in Wales needs to follow the advice from the Care Inspectorate Wales as a minimum but would recommend that in keeping with promoting safer practice (Section 2, Church in Wales' Safeguarding Policy 2016), there should be 2 adults to every 10 children in all church related activities and events.

Children under five years

Children under five years of age should always be accompanied by a parent or carer particularly if the activity is taking place outside of church premises. With regard to Sunday School where a child is under the age of five an assessment should be made as to whether the child can be in the group on their own and only if the Sunday School supervisor has agreed. In addition, the parent or carer of that child should be available and on church premises throughout all of the session.

Consent

Ensure that there is consent for each child or young person under 18 to take part in an activity. Consent forms must be completed by an adult with parental responsibility. Form 2: General Consent Form in Part 3 of this policy should be used. This should give contact information, permission to seek medical help in an emergency and details of any allergies or reactions to certain foods. Where this is being used for an on-going group or activity then this form should be renewed annually.

Additional consent (Form 3: Consent for Specific Activities) should be obtained in relation to any activity which is over and above the regular activities. This could be an occasional 'high risk' activity; for example, climbing, or a trip or residential course.

Such activities will also require formal approval using Form 6: Application for Approval of Activities. A Provincial risk assessment guidance is found at Section 18.

The use of electronic communication or social media (which are websites and applications that enable users to create a shared content or participate in social interaction) with young people requires written permission from their parents. (Form 5: Consent Form for Electronic Communication with Young People).

Forms must be filed securely in accordance with data protection and record-keeping policies and procedures.

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