

Parish Safeguarding Officer

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Safeguarding Children & Young People

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, BANSTEAD

Running Activities and Events

Children and Young People

The following procedures apply whenever children and young people under the age of 18 take part in church organised events and activities.

These include:

- One-off events or regular meetings specifically for children and young people in the parish, i.e. Sunday School, Youth Group, Mother and Toddler, etc.
- Day trips or outings
- Any mixed aged activities or events including choir practice, bell-ringing, music groups, etc.

Leadership

- One person must be designated Group Leader for every activity or event.
- Young people under 18 years are welcome and encouraged to assist with events and activities, however, they must not be left in charge of a group of children of any age, and should always be supervised by an adult leader, who is responsible for ensuring that safeguarding procedures are followed.
- For Group Leaders aged 18—21 years we recommend that there is at least a four year age gap between them and the children they are in charge of.
- Parents and carers can assist with occasional activities such as holiday workshops, but they must always be supervised, and be responsible to an appointed leader. If they become part of a regular rota, they must be properly appointed through the normal recruitment process.

Supervision

It is important to ensure that, in planning and running activities and events for children and young people, consideration is given to providing an appropriate staffing/supervision ratio of adults to participants. This will minimise any risks to children, enhance the benefits they draw from the activity or event, reassure carers, and provide some protection to those responsible for providing the activity, should concerns or incidents arise.

In the planning of activities, key factors to consider when implementing appropriate supervision levels include:

- Age and gender of children/young people
- Children with special needs
- Nature of the activity and venue

Supervision Ratios

The minimum required staffing levels for children's groups are given below. At all times there **must always be a minimum of two adults present**, and one of these must be the designated Group Leader. It is also recommended that a gender balance is maintained where possible. It should be noted that any young helper under the age of 18 should **not** be included in these supervision ratios.

A risk assessment may well indicate the need for an enhanced level of supervision and staffing for a particular activity, however the following guidelines are considered a minimum requirement for any activity:

Supervising Adults (one must be Leader)	Age of children	Max. no. of children	Ratio
2 (minimum)	0-2 years	6	1:3
2 (minimum)	2-3 years	8	1:4
2 (minimum)	3-8 years	16	1:8
2 (minimum)	Over 8 years	20	1:10

Administration

For all church activities and events, the person with parental responsibility for each child or young person under 18 will be required to complete and sign the following documentation **before** their child/ren take part:

- **Registration Record for Activities Form**
- **Photo Consent Form**

Before every outing, day trip or residential events, parents/carers must give their further written consent, and under no circumstances should a child be included in the pursuit without first obtaining written permission from their parent/carer using the **Parent Consent and Medical Information Form**.

All of these forms should be stored in a confidential place, but always be available for the Group leader/s of the activity to refer to if necessary. Group Leaders should also keep an **attendance register** of every child and adult attending each activity, event, or outing.

The Group Leader should have overall responsibility for the planning, supervision and conduct of the event or activity, and should ensure that:

- All adult helpers have been adequately vetted, and recruited in accordance with the Recruitment procedures.
- The activity, event and transport arrangements are covered by insurance. This should include public liability.
- The appropriate parental approval and consent has been obtained and all relevant documentation has been completed.
- Parents and carers have been clearly informed of the arrangements of the activity/event in order that children can be collected.
- The appropriate adult/child ratios are in place, so that children are adequately supervised at all times.
- There is a phone available for emergencies; this could be a mobile phone
- All adults are aware of the health and safety issues relating to the activity/ event, including procedures for first aid and fire.

Mixed Age Groups

One of the positive things that the church can offer is a place where young and old, children and adults can be together, including worship and learning about the faith together. Children have the opportunity to get to know adults in a shared activity, i.e. singing, making music, serving, bell ringing, study groups, etc.

When these activities include children without their parents or carers being present, it is the responsibility of the PCC to make sure that these children and young people are cared for, within health, safety and safeguarding guidelines.

Experience has shown that mixed age groups are vulnerable to infiltration by people seeking to harm children. The opportunity for regular informal contact can enable an offender or potential offender to gain the trust of a child or young person enabling them to move on to offend. The following good practice should be followed to ensure that children and young people are suitably protected when involved in a mixed age group activity:

- Mixed age activities must have designated leaders who have been appointed in accordance with the recruitment procedures.
- Organists, Choir Leaders, Tower Captains and bell ringing trainers should always be appointed as children's leaders if there are or likely to be children for whom they are responsible

- There must always be a minimum of two designated children's leaders/chaperones present when children or young people are being taught, or during rehearsals.
- Parents must sign a consent form which sets out the arrangements for the activity.
- Safety must be the top priority in the bell tower or organ loft. Those responsible should be aware of the insurance requirements for the activity.

Late Collection of Children

Parents/carers should be made aware that it is not the church's responsibility to transport children home on behalf of parents who have been delayed. It is recommended that parents are provided with a staff/volunteer contact number in order that they can phone if there is a likelihood of a late collection. In cases of late collection, the Group Leader should:

- Attempt to contact the child's parent/carer on the contact number/s provided in the Registration/Consent Form.
- Use the emergency contact name/number if necessary.
- Wait with the child/young person, with other staff/volunteers or parents present if at all possible.
- **NOT** take the child home or to any other location without the permission of the parent or carer.
- **NOT** send the child home with another person without the permission of the parent or carer.

There may be occasions where the child or young person requires transport in an emergency or where not giving a lift may place a child at risk. Such circumstances must always be recorded and reported to the Parish Safeguarding Representative and parent/carer. If the child appears to have been abandoned, statutory services must be contacted.

Unaccompanied Children

Children may begin attending church services or church activities without their parents' or carers' knowledge. In this event, the following is recommended:-

- Welcome the child/ren and try and establish whether their parents are aware of where they are.

- Depending on the age and competence of the child, ring the parents, or ask the young person to ring, to gain their consent to allow the child to remain.
- Complete a Registration Form as far as possible.
- Make sure an adult recruited for work with children takes care of the child – this is particularly important during public worship where unknown adults may attend and attempt to befriend the child.
- Give the child written information about the church service or activity to take home with a Registration Form.
- If the child comes regularly, endeavour to establish contact with the parents or carers
- Never take the child on outings or transport them without their parents/carers permission.

Use of Home Venues

No child or young person should be invited into the home of an adult who works or volunteers with them unless the reason for this has been firmly established and agreed with parents and the PCC.

It is advisable that activities for children and young people take place on church premises. In the event of leaders using their own homes for church activities, any activity which includes children under the age of 18, where their parents are not present, is subject to the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. Furthermore:

- Rooms should be checked for physical hazards and be hygienic.
- Bedrooms should not be used in any circumstances.
- Two adults (preferably unrelated) should be present from before the first child arrives until after the last one leaves.

Transport

Checks on the Driver

It is recommended that all those who drive children on church organised activities should be over 25 years and should have held a full current driving licence for over two years.

Driving licences should be checked to make sure that the volunteer does not have any recent or serious driving convictions. Where a driver has penalty points on their licence, the PCC will need to decide on a case by case basis whether or not it considers the driver to be suitable for a volunteer driver role.

If the volunteer is regularly driving children, they must complete a DBS application.

Checks on the vehicle

The vehicle needs to be safe. A MOT certificate should be requested from the driver if the vehicle is over three years old.

Cars must have front and rear seatbelts and all passengers must wear seatbelts.

Drivers are responsible for ensuring that children under 14 years of age are restrained in the correct manner. Passengers aged 14 and over are legally responsible for ensuring that they are wearing a seat belt.

Sports cars, vans and off-road vehicles could well be unsuitable for taking passengers. The vehicle must be easy for the passengers to access.

Insurance

All cars that carry children should be comprehensively insured, and the owner of the vehicle is responsible for arranging this.

It is recommended that vehicle owners inform their insurance company in writing that they will be driving during church activities, otherwise the policy could be invalidated, which would result in the driver being personally liable for any damage or injuries sustained in an accident.

Voluntary drivers should not be paid anything more than expenses actually incurred, because it could invalidate the insurance policy if the drivers are making a 'profit'.

Electronic communication, photographs & websites

All communication between children and adults, by whatever method, should take place within clear and explicit boundaries, and only for reasons related to the work of the church, so as to avoid any possible misinterpretation of motives or any behaviour which could be construed as grooming.

Adults should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny, and maintain a good and open relationship with parents and carers regarding communication with their children.

Social Networking and Chat/Messenger Sites

Social networking sites e.g. Facebook, have become increasingly popular for contacting people, discussing issues and advertising up and coming events. Adults need to be especially careful about those they accept as 'friends' on sites such as these, as they are essentially designed for peer-to-peer contact.

Many youth groups use social networking sites to share information, concerns and photographs. Young people often initiate these groups and promote them with their friends.

We would advise that social networking sites are not used for youth work at all, as the content of the messages and photographs available to be viewed may not be suitable for young people to see, and could be damaging to the adult worker's reputation and position as role model.

E-Mails

When using e-mail to communicate with children and young people, workers should:

- Make sure the child's parents/carers know and have agreed to this method of communication.
- Use clear, appropriate language to reduce the risk of misinterpretation.
- Where possible, have a separate e-mail account for church activity communications, which can be accessed by other adults in the group as required.
- Never use terms such as 'love' or 'xxx' to end the message.
- Not forward chain e-mails to young people.
- Make sure images, if sent, are appropriate.
- Make sure that any hyperlinks do not lead to inappropriate content.
- Always copy another adult into the e-mails, and save copies sent.

Mobile Phones and Text Messages

Most young people have a mobile phone, and with these also come text messages. The benefit of text is the ability to communicate and respond immediately in a given situation, but it is important to ensure that the content of the message cannot be misinterpreted. When using mobile phones and texting to communicate with children and young people, workers should:

- Make sure the child's parents/carers know and have agreed to this method of communication.
- Where possible use a separate mobile phone from your personal one (this way all calls and texts can be accounted for via an itemised phone bill).
- Only give out to young people contact details that the church has placed within the public domain.
- Use appropriate language, and do not include words or phrases which could be misinterpreted.
- Never use a kiss at the end of a text or within a signature.
- Always copy another adult into the text message.

- Be conscious of the time when sending messages or making calls, avoid late at night or early morning.

Computers

Where children and young people have access to computers as part of church activities, the Group Leader has a duty to ensure that:

- Measures are in place to ensure that the likelihood of children accessing inappropriate materials is reduced e.g. parental controls and software to filter out internet material.
- Children and young people are aware that their personal details e.g. last name, address, school, passwords, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers are private and should not be disclosed unless approval is given by the Group leader.
- Children and young people know that they should never send photographs and should be wary of chat-rooms.
- Children and young people are aware that they should advise a leader about any e-mails or anything on line that makes them feel uncomfortable or bothers them.
- Shopping and downloading (especially music and games) should be forbidden.
- Limit the time each young person is on the computer.
- Always ensure that the PCs are running up-to-date antivirus and anti Spyware software whenever connected to the internet and perform a complete Virus and Spyware scan after each session using up-to-date and licensed tools.

If you receive an e-mail or text message from a child or young person which causes concern, you should print it out and/or retain it on file and speak to the Parish Safeguarding Representative and/or the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser as soon as possible..

Taking and Publishing Photographs and Videos

The church is committed to providing a safe environment for children and young people. Implicit in this is the commitment to ensure that all published images represent participants appropriately, and with due respect, and are taken and displayed in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

The key concerns regarding the use of images of children and young people relate to:

- The possible identification of a child when a photograph is accompanied by personal information.

- The inappropriate use, adaptation or copying of images for use in child pornography websites.
- The taking of inappropriate photographs or recorded images of children and young people.

Consent

When planning community celebrations or public events, e.g. the crib service, a church fete, at which parents may wish to take photographs and/or professional photographers may be present, those attending should be advised of this in advance. If they decide to participate in the event, their consent to photographs being taken will be assumed.

In all other circumstances, the consent of parents and carers must be obtained before taking and using images of children and young people, and a chance to opt out must be given. Consent need not be in writing if it is not proposed to publish the pictures in any way, but if they are going to be displayed on a notice board, used in a parish magazine or put on the internet, then specific consent should be obtained using the **Photo**

Consent Form.

Those taking photographs need to bear in mind that parents and carers may have good reasons for refusing consent, e.g. some children may have been involved in legal disputes, local authority care, or adoption, and their whereabouts may not be widely known. Parents and carers of the affected children will know this and will appropriately withhold consent without giving the reason.

Storage of Images

Be clear about whether the image is to be retained for further use. Store the image securely, and ideally store consent forms with the image/s for future reference.

Good Practice Guidelines

- Pictures of children should not be taken without another adult present.
- The photograph/video should focus on the activity rather than a particular child, avoiding full face and body shots and taking into consideration the age of the children involved.
- Photographs submitted for publication where young people are recognisable and there is insufficient evidence that their consent has been obtained should not be published. Permission **should not** be assumed, even if images have been submitted by parishes for publication.

- If at a church-related event, children may use cameras to take photos of each other, or if parents or carers take photos of children other than their own, they should be advised that these can be used for personal use only, and should not be displayed in any publicly accessible space, including on internet or web-based communication channels such as Facebook.

If you are approached by a reporter, photographer or film-crew who wants to use images of children from your parish, do emphasise that your policy is to obtain permission from the parents involved, and refer them to the Diocesan Communications Adviser.

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The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser

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Ian acts as a contact point for those in the church and community to ensure that the Diocese of Guildford maintains the highest standards of safeguarding for all children and adults. Promoting good practice in safeguarding, ensuring an appropriate pastoral and professional response to concerns and issues.