



**Good Practice Guide For Church Workers With
Children And Young People
2024**

A message from the Bishop of Oxford

We the bishops, clergy and people of the Diocese are committed to the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of all the children and vulnerable adults in our care. Many children are involved in the life of the Church, in worship and in various activities, under the guidance of a dedicated group of leaders and helpers. These adults give their time freely and generously so that our children and vulnerable adults can grow in the faith of Jesus Christ. Both children and adults need a safe and secure environment in which to work.

This brief guide is intended to assist leaders and helpers in the implementation of the Diocese of Oxford Safeguarding Handbook which should be read for the complete policy, procedures and requirements for good practice. The safeguarding pages on the Diocesan website provide further information and guidance.

Recruitment

All leaders and helpers should follow Diocesan-approved recruitment procedures, which include:

- submitting an application form with references
- completing a Confidential Declaration Form
- having a valid Enhanced Disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service, with barring information if eligible
- accepting that the role is a position of trust

One of the aims of the policy is for church groups to provide a warm, nurturing environment for children and young people whilst avoiding any inappropriate behaviour.

All volunteers in group work must work within sight of another adult.

Positions of Trust

The Diocese makes the following expectations for those in a position of trust:

- all church workers must conduct themselves at all times in accordance with the reasonable expectations of someone who represents the Church; this includes both while on duty and also when off duty;
- they must possess a personal copy of this Good Practice Guide for their work and comply with it;
- they will be seen as role models by the children or vulnerable adults with whom they are in contact at all times, including when they are off duty;
- they must not in their private life engage in activities which could bring the church or their role in it into disrepute;
- they must take care to observe appropriate boundaries between their work and their

- personal life. For example, they must ensure that all communications they may have with or about children or vulnerable adults are appropriate in their tone;
- they must seek advice immediately if they come across a child or vulnerable adult who may have been harmed (including self-harm) or a colleague whose conduct appears inappropriate;
- they must not share or promote material which is sexually explicit, profane, obscene, harassing, fraudulent, racially offensive, politically inflammatory, defamatory, or in violation of any British, European or international law.
- they must inform the relevant church authorities promptly should any convictions, court orders or allegations of misconduct arise.

It is contrary to the policy of the Church of England for those in a position of trust, including priests and youth workers among others, to have sexual or inappropriate personal relationships with those for whom they are responsible. A breach of this is likely to be considered as a disciplinary offence. It will be referred as appropriate to the local authority designated officer (LADO) and in some cases it may also constitute a criminal offence. Anyone found guilty of a criminal or disciplinary offence of this kind is likely to be dismissed and referred to the Disclosure and Barring Service for possible barring.

Code of Conduct

You should:

- Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity
- Watch your own language, tone of voice and body language
- Ensure all communications with and about children are appropriate in their tone.
- Work within sight of another adult.
- Ensure another adult is informed if a child needs to be taken to the toilet. Toilet breaks should be organised for young children
- If known in advance, seek a parent's permission if a child or young person is to be seen on their own. Another adult must be nearby and the child or young person must know this.
- Ensure that each group includes both a male and a female helper if possible.
- Ensure that children and young people know who they can talk to if they need to speak to someone. Display the Childline telephone number in a prominent place where children & young people can see it.
- Respond warmly to a child who needs comforting but make sure there are other adults around.
- Administer any necessary First Aid with others around.
- Respond to accidents and make a note in the Accident Book.
- Plan trips and holidays carefully, including sleeping arrangements.
- Record any concerning incidents and give the information to your Group Leader. Sign and date the record, and also print your name in capital letters. See guidance on *Recording safeguarding issues*.

You should not:

- Use physical punishment to discipline children – this is illegal
- Invade a child's privacy whilst washing or toileting.
- Play rough or sexually provocative games.
- Be sexually suggestive about or to a child or young person even in fun.
- Touch a child inappropriately or obtrusively.
- Scapegoat, ridicule or reject any child, young person or group.
- Show favouritism to any one child, young person or group.
- Allow a child or young person to involve you in excessive attention seeking that is overtly

physical or sexual in nature.

- Give lifts to children or young people on their own or on your own if possible.
- Invite a child to your home alone.
- Permit abusive peer activities e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing or bullying.
- Allow unknown adults access to children. Visitors should always be accompanied by a known person.
- Allow strangers to give children lifts.
- Behave in work or in your private life in a way which would bring your role or the church into disrepute.

Touch

One of the aims of the policy is for church groups to provide a warm, nurturing environment for children and young people whilst avoiding any inappropriate behaviour or the risk of allegations being made. Child abuse is harm of a very serious nature so that it is unlikely that any type of physical contact in the course of children and youth work could be misconstrued as abuse. All volunteers must work with or within sight of another adult. All physical contact should be an appropriate response to the child's needs not the needs of the adult.

- If any activity, for example bell-ringing, requires physical contact make sure that the young person and their parents are aware of this and its nature.
- There must be no physical punishment of any kind nor should any sanction ridicule or humiliate a child.
- Avoid unnecessary informal touching.
- Avoid taking young children to the toilet, but when unavoidable make sure another adult is informed, or organise a toilet break for the whole group.
- Young children may sometimes need comforting; make sure they are responded to warmly but with other adults around.
- First Aid should be administered with others around. Enter details in the Accident Book.
- Very occasionally it may be necessary to restrain a child or young person who is harming himself or others. Use the least possible force and inform the parents as soon as possible. All such incidents should be recorded and the information given to the Parish Safeguarding Officer.

Colleagues must be prepared to support each other and act or speak out if they think any adult is behaving inappropriately.

Transporting Children By Private Car

- Transport and travel arrangements are the responsibility of parents if they make informal arrangements among themselves. They are the responsibility of the church if church workers organize or provide them.
- Children and young people should not be transported in a private car without the prior consent of their parents or carers. This also applies to giving lifts to and from a church activity.
- All those who drive children on church-organised activities should normally be over 25 and should have held a full driving licence for over two years.
- All cars that carry children must be comprehensively insured. The insured person must make sure that their insurance covers the giving of lifts during church activities. They must inform their insurance company should be informed that lifts may be given. There are separate requirements governing minibuses.
- All cars that carry children should be clean and in a roadworthy condition.

- All children must wear suitable seat belts and use appropriate booster seats. If there are no seat belts children should not be carried.
- Take care in assisting children to board or leave vehicles, taking account of the guidance on touch.
- At no time should the number of children in a car exceed the usual passenger number. There must be a seat belt for every passenger.
- Any driver who has an endorsement of 6 points or more on their licence should inform the Parish Safeguarding Officer.
- Any driver who has an “unspent” conviction for a drink driving offence or for Dangerous Driving or Racing on the Highway should not transport children.
- There should preferably be a non-driving adult escort as well as the driver. This may be particularly needed if a child is known to have a disability or special need. This adult should sit in the back, behind the driver, with the child in the seat beside him or her. 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.
- To ensure that these guidelines are adhered to it would be appropriate to obtain a signed undertaking, covering the above issues, from those people who are prepared to transport children in their cars.
- Drivers who are not children’s workers should be recruited for the task through the normal safer recruitment process.

Registers and Consents

- A Registration Form should be completed for every child or young person who attends groups.
- A Register should be kept of all children and young people’s groups that meet regularly. For one-off events a list of the children should be kept.
- All Registers and lists should be retained.
- Written parental consent should be obtained for all activities that involve leaving the church premises.

Recommended Staffing Levels

The minimum recommended staffing levels for children’s groups are given below: More help may be required if children are being taken out or undertaking physical activities.

0 – 2 years	1 person for every 3 children	1 : 3
2 – 3 years	1 person for every 4 children	1 : 4
4 – 8 years	1 person for every 8 children	1 : 8
Over 8 years	1 person for the first 8 children then 1 more for every extra 12 children	1:12

- Each group should have at least 2 adults and it is recommended that there should be at least one male and one female.
- If groups are in the same room or adjoining rooms with doors open then one person per group is allowed.
- Young people aged 16 and 17 may help with groups but should be supervised by an adult helper who will be responsible for ensuring good practice and that child protection procedures are followed. Young people under 16 may help with other things but should not have responsibility for children.

- Additional adults may help on one or two occasions but must be responsible to an appointed worker. Thereafter they should become part of the team and be properly appointed through the normal recruitment process.

Special Needs

Welcome children and young people with special needs to the group. Try to make the premises, toilets and access suitable for people with disabilities. Ask the parent about how best to meet the child's special needs, and do not see this as the responsibility only of the child's parent. If premises are being designed or refurbished, take the opportunity to anticipate the possible special needs of future children and adults; advice is available. See the guidance *Welcome, Inclusion, Respect*.

Health and Safety

- Insurance, First Aid Kit and fire precautions should be checked at least once a year and reported.
- Written risk assessments should be made before taking children on activities outside the premises. See guidance on *Risk Assessments*.

These are the recommended standards for premises:

- Meeting places should be warm, well lit and well ventilated. They should be kept clean and free of clutter.
- Toilets and hand basins should be easily available. Hygienic drying facilities should be provided. Roller towels should be avoided.
- Ensure you have enough space available for the intended activity.
- If food is regularly prepared for children on the premises, the facilities will need to be checked by the Environmental Health Officer and a Food Handling and Hygiene Certificate acquired. Children's packed lunches should be kept refrigerated. Drinks should always be available.
- Groups must have access to a phone in order to call for help if necessary.
- Adults should be aware of the fire procedures. Fire extinguishers should be regularly checked and smoke detectors fitted throughout the premises. A fire drill should be carried out regularly.
- No smoking should be permitted in the areas where there are children.
- Alcohol or intoxicating drugs must not be used by those who have children and young people in their care or at a time when their use could affect their care.
- Unaccompanied children and young people should not walk to or from your premises along dark or badly lit paths, if possible. (No streetlights in Cassington.)
- A First Aid kit and Accident Book should be available on the premises. The contents of the First Aid Kit should be stored in a waterproof container and be clearly marked. Each group should designate one worker to check the contents at prescribed intervals. All staff and volunteer workers should be encouraged have some First Aid knowledge and the parish should encourage access to First Aid training. A list of first aiders in the parish should be compiled and kept available. All accidents must be recorded in the accident book.

Hearing a Child Abuse Disclosure

If a child asks to talk in confidence **do not** promise confidentiality – you have a duty to refer a child or young person (under 16) who is at risk. Explain that you may have to get other people to help if they are being harmed.

Ensure you have as much privacy as possible but try to have another adult present when the child is speaking to you.

- Stay calm
- Listen to the child attentively
- Maintain eye contact
- Allow the child to talk but do not press for information except to clarify what has happened
- Do not use leading questions (questions which imply a certain answer)
- Tell the child that they are not to blame for anything that has happened
- Reassure the child that they were right to tell
- Let the child know that other people will have to be told so that the abuse can stop
- Try to explain what will happen next in a way the child can understand
- Make a written record, quoting the child's actual words. Sign and date this. See guidance on *Recording safeguarding issues*.
- Discuss with your Safeguarding Officer but do not delay if they are unavailable.
- Make a referral to the local authority children's social care service for your area. See below.
- If unsure whether to refer, consult the children's social care service.
- Inform the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser of your referral.

What To Do If You Suspect A Child Has Been Abused & You Need To Take Urgent Action

What to do if you have a safeguarding concern

If someone is in immediate danger

If you have information about a safeguarding situation where a child or adult is in immediate danger, or requires immediate medical attention, call emergency services on 999.

If there is no risk of immediate harm

If you do not think there is a risk of immediate harm, please speak to a safeguarding professional about your concern as soon as possible. If you have significant concerns please report to children's social service or adult's social services without delay. When first reporting a concern, please be sure to make contact using the information shown below.

Outside office hours

For urgent safeguarding enquiries outside of office hours (see below), please call our partners [Thirtyone:eight](tel:03030031111) on 0303 003 1111 for confidential advice, guidance and support.

During office hours

Call 01865 208 295 or email safeguardingreferrals@oxford.anglican.org for urgent safeguarding concerns Monday to Thursday 9am – 5pm and Friday 9am – 4.30pm.

You can also contact your area safeguarding adviser directly if you prefer:

- Buckingham – Tsungai Muchegwa: 07435 550 685
- Oxford and Dorchester – Erica Hegg: 07341 866832
- Berkshire – Charlotte Wilmshurst: 07443 700159

Please inform Parish Safeguarding Officer of your concerns: safeguardingspl@gmail.com

Less Urgent Situations

If the child is not in immediate danger, if you are not sure if child abuse is involved, or if you have concerns about a child and you need someone to talk things over with, then contact either:

- your Group Leader, Child Protection Representative or equivalent, or
- your local Children's Social Care or
- the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser

In all cases, make notes, as accurately as you can, of the details of the allegation, all that happens, and anything that was said, which struck you as particularly significant. Ensure you note from the church's registration records the child's name, age, address, telephone number and GP.

Remember that, under the Data Protection Act, you will need to make any notes available to the child & family if they request them.

- The notes must be kept in a safe, secure place indefinitely.
- Notify your Group Leader if you have not already done so.
- Seek support for yourself from an appropriate person within the church

Other issues

Please see the Diocesan Safeguarding Handbook for detailed guidance

The Diocesan handbook can be found on www.oxford.anglican.org/index.php/

Important telephone numbers:

Statutory agencies (please write in your local numbers)

Thames Valley Police (all non-emergency enquiries)	101
Local Council Children's Social Care	0345 050 7666
Local General Hospital (Witney Community Hospital)	01865 904222
John Radcliffe Hospital	0300 304 7777

Childline 0800 1111

Diocesan contacts:

Louise Whitehead, Head of Safeguarding	07391 868 478
Erica Hegg, Area Advisor for Oxford and Dorchester	07341 866 832
Melody Stack, Safeguarding Training & Policy Adviser	01865 587041
Linda Carpenter, Safeguarding & DBS Administrator	01865 208267
Yvonne Morris, Diocesan Children's Adviser	01865 208255
Ian Macdonald, Diocesan Youth Adviser	01865 208253

Parish contacts (please write in your local numbers):

Name	Role	Phone
Duncan Fraser	Incumbent	07810 324088
Laura Churchyard	Youth Leader	07539 747237
Sue Greenwood	Safeguarding Officer	07779262850