

# Safer Church

## Code of safer working practice for Church workers with children



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### Who is this Code for?

This Code is for all who work with children and young people in parishes in the Diocese of Peterborough. This includes those who have a Bishop's Licence or Permission to Officiate, and both volunteer and paid children's and youth workers.

### What does it apply to?

This Code applies to all church activities with children and young people under the age of 18. This includes Sunday schools, crèches, holiday clubs, youth clubs, one-off outings and activities, and home visits.

### Why have a Code?

The purpose of the Code is to protect children and young people, as well as leaders.

### Terminology used in this code

- The word 'child' refers to any child or young person under the age of 18.
- The term 'group leader' is used to refer to the person with overall responsibility for a group or activity, who is answerable to the Parochial Church Council.

Garry Johnson, Diocesan Safeguarding Officer  
garry.johnson@peterborough-diocese.org.uk  
01733 887000 / dl 01733 887041  
[www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/safeguarding](http://www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/safeguarding)

This Code of safer working practice for Church workers with children follows the Church of England's model code of Safer Working Practice (*House of Bishop's Protecting All God's Children 2010 p63*).

# 1 Guidelines for individual workers

## You should:

- treat all children and young people with respect and dignity;
- ensure that your own language, tone of voice and body language is respectful;
- always aim to 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 organized for young children;
- ensure that children and young people know who they can talk to if they need to speak to someone about a personal concern;
- respond warmly to a child who needs comforting, but make sure there are other adults around; if any activity requires physical contact, ensure that the child and parents are aware of this and its nature beforehand;
- administer any necessary First Aid with others around;
- obtain consent for any photographs/videos to be taken, shown or displayed;
- record any concerning incidents and give the information to your group leader. Sign and date the record;
- always share concerns about a child or the behaviour of another worker with your group leader and/or the safeguarding co-ordinator.

## You should not:

- initiate physical contact. Any necessary contact (e.g. for comfort, see above) should be initiated by the child;
- invade a child's privacy while washing or toileting;
- play rough physical or sexually provocative games;
- use any form of physical punishment;
- be sexually suggestive about or to a child even in fun;
- touch a child inappropriately or obtrusively;
- scapegoat, ridicule or reject a child, group or adult;
- permit abusive peer activities e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing or bullying;
- show favouritism to any one child 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;
- smoke tobacco in the presence of children;
- drink alcohol when responsible for young people;
- share sleeping accommodation with children;
- invite a child to your home alone;
- arrange social occasions with children (other than family members) outside organized group occasions;
- allow unknown adults access to children. Visitors should always be accompanied by a known person;
- allow strangers to give children lifts.

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## Touch

Church-sponsored groups and activities should provide a warm, nurturing environment for children and young people, while 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.

Very occasionally it may be necessary to restrain a

child or young person who is harming her/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 church safeguarding co-ordinator.

All physical contact should be an appropriate response to the child's needs not the needs of the adult. Colleagues must be prepared to support each other and act or speak out if they think any adult is behaving inappropriately.

## 2 Additional guidelines for group leaders

In addition to the guidelines for individual workers above, the group leader should:

- ensure any health and safety requirements are adhered to;
- undertake risk assessments with appropriate action taken and record kept;
- keep register and consent forms up to date;
- have an awareness, at all times, of what is taking place and who is present;
- create space for children to talk – either formally or informally;
- liaise with the parish safeguarding officer over good practice for safeguarding;
- always inform the parish safeguarding officer of any specific safeguarding concerns that arise. The parish safeguarding officer will liaise with the diocesan safeguarding officer;
- liaise with the PCC.

## 3 Responding to child protection concerns

Do not try to deal with any child protection concern on your own. Always tell your group leader and safeguarding co-ordinator. Agree between you who will take what action and when.

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 again you should contact your group leader or the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer. The Local Authority Children's Social Care Duty Officer can also be a source of advice.

Always make notes about a possible child protection incident or disclosure as accurately as possible, as soon as possible. These should cover what has happened, in what context, and anything that seemed particularly significant. Quote the child's words exactly where possible. Try if possible to note from the register the child's full name, age, date of birth, address, telephone number and GP. Remember to sign the record and add your name, role, date of incident and date of the recording.

The following are all important points to help anyone facing this difficult situation:

- ensure all notes are kept in a safe place;
- if a child asks to talk in confidence do not promise confidentiality – you have a duty to refer a child/young person who is at risk to the statutory agencies;
- always explain that you may have to get other people to help;
- stay calm;
- listen to the child attentively;
- maintain eye contact;
- allow the child to talk, but do not press for information or ask leading questions;
- 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 and why;
- try to explain what will happen next in a way the child can understand;
- reassure the child that he or she will continue to receive support.

### Imminent risk

If you encounter a child in a situation where the child is in imminent danger, you should act immediately to secure the safety of the child. Seek the assistance of the police and then make a referral to Local Authority Children's Social Care.

If a child needs emergency medical attention, this should be sought immediately and directly from the emergency services. Parents, if available, should be kept fully informed.

### 3 Responding to child protection concerns (continued)

#### What to do if you suspect a child is at risk or has been abused

- Agree with your group leader who will make the referral.
- Make an immediate telephone referral to the Local Authority Children's Social Care. Make it clear from the first point of contact that you are making a child protection referral.
- Describe the event or disclosure and give information about the child and family, for example the child's name, date of birth, address, telephone number and GP if known.
- Follow up your telephone call with a completed referral form (sometimes available on the Local Authority web site) or letter.
- If there is no acknowledgement within 48 hours, chase it.
- Remember that the child & family should, wherever possible, be informed about and consent to the referral unless this would put the welfare of the child or another person at further risk. If you have serious concerns, the absence of consent should not prevent a referral. The Duty Social Worker will give you advice over this if necessary.
- Be prepared to have further discussions with the social work team or the police investigation team. Say if you do not want your details disclosed to the family.
- For out of hours referrals, call the Emergency Social Work Team or where urgent, the police.
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- Say if you do not want your details disclosed to the family.
- For out of hours referrals, call the Emergency Social Work Team or where urgent, the police.
- Consult with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer at any point in this process but in any case always ensure the DSO is informed of the concern and actions taken.

## 4 Guidelines for good practice for church sponsored activities for children and young people

### 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. Disability legislation requires organizations to take reasonable steps to meet the needs of disabled people and this includes children.

### Registration

A registration form should be completed for every child or young person who attends groups or activities. The form should be updated annually and include the following:

- Name and address,
- Date of birth,
- Emergency contact details,
- Medical information,
- Any special needs including activities that the child is unable to take part in.
- Consent for emergency medical treatment
- Consent for photographs and videos if relevant.

Separate consent should be obtained for one-off events and activities, for example swimming, and also for outings, weekends away, etc.

All personal details and consent forms must be stored securely.

Any group that includes children who are under six years old and that meets regularly for more than two hours in any one day or for more than fourteen days a year must register their group. Please contact your local branch of OFSTED for advice.

A template registration form is available in the Toolkit at:  
[www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/safeguarding](http://www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/safeguarding)

### Consent

Consent needs to be from a parent or person with parental responsibility. It can be from the child or young person if he or she has sufficient age and understanding in relation to the specific issue. So, for example, while parental consent is always required for a group residential holiday, a teenager would usually be able to consent to the photos from the holiday being displayed in church. You should record who has given consent for any specific activity.

### Recommended staffing levels

The recommended minimum staffing levels for children's groups are given below.

More help may be required if children are being taken out, are undertaking physical activities or if circumstances require it.

0–2 yrs 1 person for every 3 children 1 : 3

2–3 yrs 1 person for every 4 children 1 : 4

3–8 yrs 1 person for every 8 children 1 : 8

Over 8 yrs 1 person for the first 8 children then 1 extra person for every extra 12 children

- Each group should have at least two adults and it is recommended that there should be at least one male and one female.
- If small groups are in the same room or adjoining rooms with open access between them then it is possible to have only one adult per group, dependent on the nature of the activity.
- Young people who are being encouraged to develop their leadership skills through helping should always be overseen by an appointed worker who will be responsible for ensuring that good practice and safeguarding procedures are followed and the work they are doing is appropriate to both their age and understanding.
- Adults who assist on one or two occasions must be responsible to an appointed worker. Thereafter they should become part of the team and be properly appointed through the normal recruitment process.

## 4 Guidelines for good practice for church sponsored activities for children and young people (continued)

### Safe environment

Display both the Childline telephone number in a prominent place where children and young people can see it and the Parentline Plus number for parents.

Undertake a risk assessment for each activity and in greater detail for an unusual activity or when away from the usual location.

#### Minimum standards for a safe environment:

- Meeting places should be warm, well lit and well ventilated. They should be kept clean and free of clutter.
- Electric sockets should be covered.
- Toilets and hand basins should be easily available with hygienic drying facilities.
- Appropriate space and equipment should be available for any 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.
- Unaccompanied children and young people should be encouraged not to walk to or from your premises along dark or badly lit paths.
- 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 to 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.

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### E-safety

- Ensure all electronic communications are appropriate and professional.
- If using e-technology as a group activity, ensure that an adult worker knows and understands what is happening within the group.
- Do not make any relationship with a child (other than family members) through a social networking site.
- Maintain a log of all electronic contact with individuals or groups including messaging and texting.

For detailed guidelines on E-safety visit:  
[www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/e-safety](http://www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/e-safety)

## 4 Guidelines for good practice for church sponsored activities for children and young people (continued)

### Transporting children on behalf of the church

#### Drivers

- All those who drive children on church-organized activities should have held a full and clean driving licence for over two years.
- Drivers who are not children's workers should be recruited for the task through the normal recruitment process.
- Any driver who has an endorsement of 6 points or more on their licence should inform the group leader and the church/parish safeguarding officer
- Any driver who has an unspent conviction for any serious road traffic offence should not transport children for the church.
- Drivers must always be in a fit state ie not over-tired; not under the influence of alcohol; not taking illegal substances; not under the influence of medicine which may induce drowsiness.

#### Minibus or coach

- Workers and helpers should sit among the group and not together.
- If noise or behaviour appears to be getting out of control, stop the vehicle until calm is restored.
- Before using a minibus, ensure you know the up-to-date regulations for its use and have had a trial drive.

#### Private car

- 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 formally arranged lifts to and from a church activity.
- All cars that carry children should be comprehensively insured for both private and business use. The insured person should make sure that their insurance covers the giving of lifts relating to church-sponsored activities.
- All cars that carry children should be in a roadworthy condition.
- All children must wear suitable seat belts and use appropriate booster seats. If there are insufficient seat belts, additional children should not be carried.
- At no time should the number of children in a car exceed the usual passenger number.
- 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.

Template transport agreements and forms are available in the Toolkit at:  
[www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/safeguarding](http://www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/safeguarding)