

GUIDELINES FOR CHILDREN'S & YOUTH MINISTRY IN PERSONAL HOMES



Where suitable, mission and ministry with children and young people carried out by volunteers and employed workers for the Church of England, should take place on church premises (this includes appropriate spaces in vicarages).

Where this is not possible then private dwellings can be used, but additional steps need to be taken to ensure the safeguarding of both participants and leaders.

The type of activities that could take place in private dwellings include:

- Group work like Bible studies or prayer meetings
- Social gatherings like pizza games or film nights
- Meals which include a variety of people of all ages
- Celebrations and life events
- Planning and preparation meetings
- Community projects – e.g. teams of young people and leaders help residents of local community with manual tasks
- Volunteer or employment supervision where the supervisor is using their home as their place of work or where inclusion of confidential or sensitive conversations preclude public spaces
- Visits to the home of the young person – but only when an appointment has been made by the parents/carers and the visits are done in pairs

Activities that should not take place in personal homes include:

- One to one mentoring or counselling sessions

Acknowledgements

This document draws on the wisdom of an ecumenical expert panel published in '[Youth work in private dwellings](#)'

NON CHURCH EVENTS

Activities that are excluded from these guidelines include arrangements made by parents/carers with other parents/carers where, although the relationship may have been formed through the Church, the activity is not organised by the Church or part of their organised programme.





REMEMBERING SAFEGUARDING

All work with children and young people must be undertaken within the safeguarding policy and practice of the organisation that has oversight and responsibility for the activity. This includes the safer recruitment of all adults working with them, appropriate safeguarding training and checks, and appropriate and prompt reporting of any issues and/or disclosures.

Those managing the DBS application should ensure that the option for work in the home is ticked.



NEED SOME HELP?

If in doubt please refer to the document linked below which is safeguarding practice guidance:
[safer-environment-and-activities-oct19_0.pdf \(churchofengland.org\)](#)



ADDITIONAL STEPS FOR YOUTH GATHERINGS IN PERSONAL HOMES



GUIDELINE 1

If a personal home is going to be used on a regular basis rather than part of a one off activity, then:

- this must be agreed by the PCC (or relevant governance structure for networks or organisations that work in more than one church)
- along with a risk assessment
- and the decision reviewed regularly.
- This includes ensuring that the activity is covered by the church's or the home owner's insurance policy.

EXAMPLE SCENARIO

The Church Hall is going to be renovated so the Youth Group will be unable to use it for six months. The parents of one of the leaders who live across the road from the Church have offered their lounge for the Sunday morning session for 11-14s.

The leaders need to present the PCC with a risk assessment, which includes getting the young people to and from the church, for agreement prior to the change in location. This should be reviewed after the first session and again after three months.

GUIDELINE 2

Parents/carers must be informed that the gathering will be taking place in a personal home and given the address including the postcode.

Informed consent forms (which need to be updated annually) should include notes for parents/carers on what they can expect from an activity/event and how they can raise concerns at any stage.

EXAMPLE SCENARIO

The leaders have planned a 'find your supper' event, where the young people have to work out clues and navigate their way to Church members' houses for each course of their meal.

An outline of the evening including all the locations and likely timings can be given to parents/carers on arrival, or sent to a Whatsapp group, so that they know where the young people are going without spoiling the surprise.



GUIDELINE 3

It must be made clear whether the group is making their way from the church to the personal home and back, or whether the event/activity starts and finishes at the personal home, including start and finish times.

EXAMPLE SCENARIO

A young person (who has parental permission to come and go from the session on their own) chooses to walk straight home rather than back to the church because home is nearer.

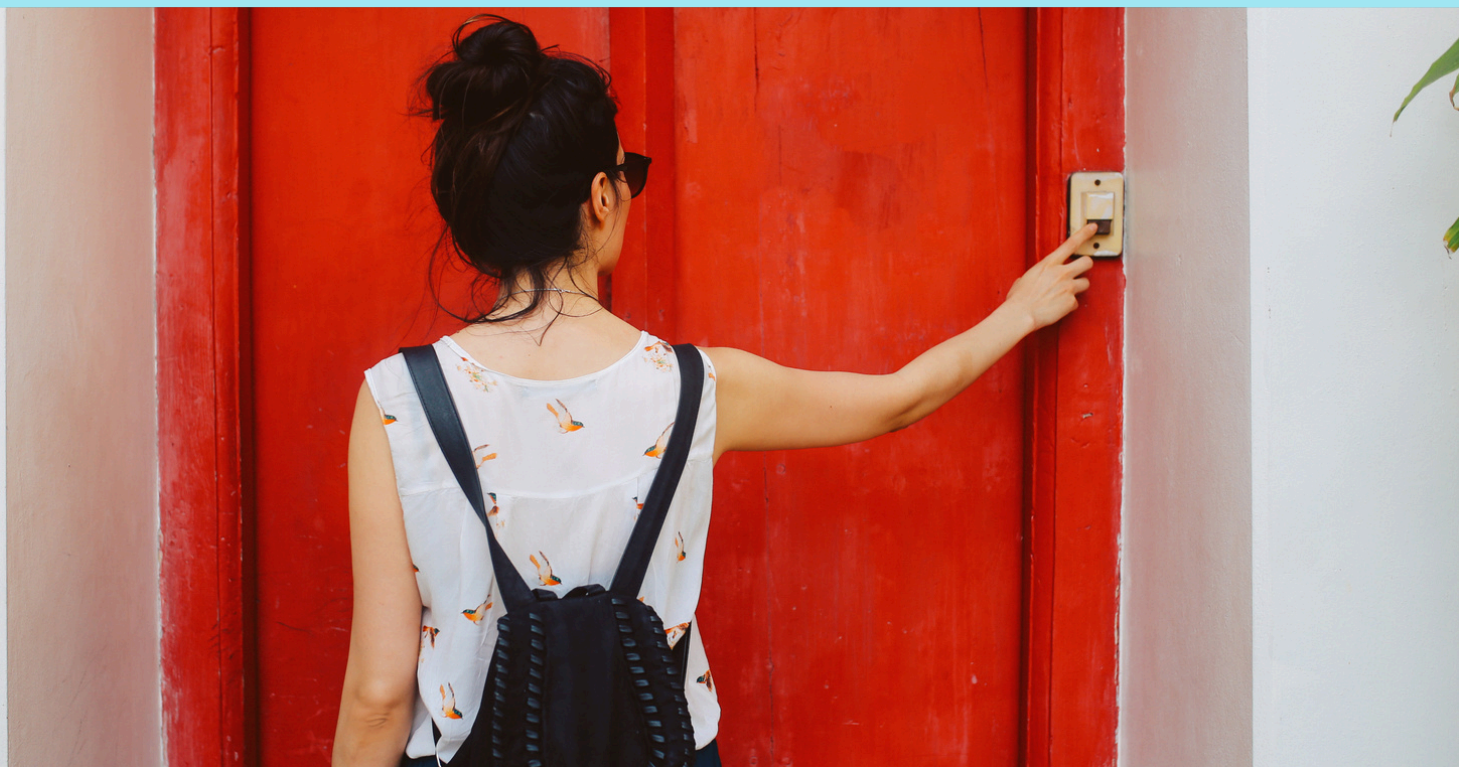
The leaders should send a text to the parent telling them what was agreed and what time the young person left. This can get tricky as the young people get older and are more independent.

GUIDELINE 4

A risk assessment must be completed and information shared with the team and the hosts about how any risks will be mitigated. Support and training on the development and application of risk assessments for new leaders should be readily available from the diocese.

EXAMPLE

- This should include unsafe places that are out of bounds – like garages and tool sheds.
- It should ensure that a clean toilet with a lock is available to all users without access via a bedroom.
- It should also include fire evacuation policy.



GUIDELINE 5

Ensure that extra adults are onsite in addition to the normal adult:child/young person ratio. i.e. at least three adults particularly where a couple are leading the activity in their own home. There should be at least one adult present who does not live at the venue and isn't related to those who do.

EXAMPLE SCENARIO

A young person arrives at the house of the youth leader who is finishing off putting their own children to bed before the session starts, leaving the young person on their own with their spouse who is preparing refreshments in the kitchen.

Another leader or two onsite means that there is no risk of the young person being in a room on their own with a lone adult.

GUIDELINE 6

Ensure that the hosts maintain appropriate boundaries including identifying 'no go areas' and consistently demonstrate respect and sensitivity to the needs of the CYP present.

EXAMPLE

This includes things like underwear drying on radiators and seeing inside bedrooms. It is important to designate a 'family-only' space for householders that is separate from the rooms that the meeting is taking place in.

GUIDELINE 7

Alcohol, medication and dangerous items must be removed from any room accessible to young people and kept locked away securely. If you are using kitchen or craft knives or other potentially harmful equipment as part of an activity make sure that they are accounted for and cleared away properly by the adults.

WHY?

Sadly a young person planning to take their own life may spend a period of time 'gathering' the means to do so from a number of locations.



GUIDELINE 8

Alert neighbours to the possibility of young people meeting on the property and ensure effective communication about safeguarding and any other issues like noise.

EXAMPLE SCENARIO

The youth group are going to have a bonfire party in the large vicarage garden.

Make sure the neighbours know the start and end time so that they are aware that there may be extra cars and noise.



GUIDELINE 9

Ensure that there is a stocked first aid kit at the gathering, and that at least one of the adults is first aid trained.



GUIDELINE 10

All adults present at the time of the gathering must have a satisfactory DBS check. If this is not possible, then the leaders are responsible for ensuring that any interaction is accompanied by the leaders.

EXAMPLE SCENARIO

The youth group has been invited to a Good Friday hot cross bun making session at someone's house. The female host is a DBS checked occasional team member, but her husband isn't. He agrees to take the dog out during the session, but he comes home a bit early because of inclement weather.

He should be able to access the 'family only space' and not left unaccompanied with the young people.

GUIDELINE 11

Registers should be kept in the same way they would for a gathering on church premises, with times of late/early arrivals and departures. A photo of the register, and any notes of concerns or issues, should be sent to the person identified by the PCC or body authorising the event as responsible for securely storing this information.

ANY QUESTIONS?

If you have further queries, please speak to your Parish Safeguarding Officer in the first instance or contact your Diocesan Safeguarding Lead.

We will keep track of the advice in this document and will update as appropriate.

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