

SUMMARY OF HOUSE OF BISHOPS MODEL CODE OF SAFER WORKING PRACTICE

Church-sponsored groups and activities should provide a warm happy and 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 possible 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 Parish Safeguarding Coordinator.

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.

- 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 organised 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 coordinator.

You should not:

- Initiate physical contact. Any necessary contact 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 or young person 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 organised group occasions;

- Allow unknown adults access to children. Visitors should always be accompanied by a known person;
- Allow strangers to give children lifts.

Additional guidelines for group leaders

- 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 Safeguarding Coordinator over good practice for safeguarding;
- Always inform the Safeguarding Coordinator of any specific safeguarding concerns that arise.

Children with Special Needs

Premises, toilets and access should be suitable for children and people with disabilities in order that the church can welcome them. The parent should be asked how best to meet the child's special needs.

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

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. A record must be kept of those who have given consent for any specific activity.

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;
- All personal details and consent forms must be stored securely.

Staffing levels

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.

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 possible. 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.

Safe environment

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

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 handbasins 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 premises along dark or poorly 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. 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.

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. (See Diocesan Guidance on e-Safety).

RECORD-KEEPING AND DATA PROTECTION

The Data Protection Act 1998 contains principles governing the use of personal data. These are reproduced below for convenience. Personal data should be:

- processed fairly and lawfully;
- obtained and used for specific purposes;
- adequate, relevant and not excessive;
- accurate;
- not kept for longer than is necessary;
- processed in line with a person's rights;
- secure;
- not transferred to non-UK countries without adequate protection.
- The parish should also maintain records relating to parish appointments, including a note of when a DBS check was obtained. Records should be kept secure and retained after the people concerned have left the diocese.
- Records of child protection matters should be kept, together with a note of the outcome. These should be retained even if the information received was judged to be malicious, unsubstantiated or unfounded. Records of known offenders against children should be retained indefinitely, together with a copy of any agreement and reviews.

The House of Bishops Safeguarding Children Policy reminds parishes that nothing in data protection legislation seeks to limit appropriate disclosure in order to protect an individual who either is, or may be, at risk. What matters is that the process of information sharing is reasonable and proportionate.

The full text of the Model Code can be found in the HOB Safeguarding Children policy 2010, p. 63-70.