


11. A Safe Environment and Activities⁵⁷

The House of Bishops' Safeguarding Policy Statement states that *'The Church will strive to create and maintain environments that are safer for all, that promote well-being, that prevent abuse, and that create nurturing, caring conditions within the Church for children, young people and vulnerable adults ... The Church will strive to support all church officers to adhere to safer working good practice and to challenge the abuse of power'*.

11.1 Code of safer working practice⁵⁸

All those working on behalf of the parish with children, young people and adults must:

- Treat all individuals with respect and dignity.
- Ensure that their own language, tone of voice and body language are respectful.
- Ensure that children, young people and adults know who they can talk to about a personal concern.
- Record and report any concerns about a child, young person or adult and/or the behaviour of another worker with their activity leader and/or Parish Safeguarding Officer. Sign and date the record.
- Obtain written consent for any photographs/videos to be taken, shown, displayed or stored (see Model Consent Form – Photographs – Images ).

- Administer any First Aid with others around.

In addition, for children and young people must:

- Always aim to work with or 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.
- Respond warmly to a child who needs comforting but make sure there are other adults around.
- Ensure that the child and parents are aware of any activity that requires physical contact and its nature before the activity takes place.

All those working on behalf of the parish with children, young people and adults must not:

- Invade an individual's privacy whilst washing and toileting.
- Use any form of physical punishment.
- Be sexually suggestive about or to an individual.
- Scapegoat, ridicule or reject an individual or group.
- Permit abusive peer activities e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing or bullying.
- Show favoritism to any one individual or group.
- Allow an individual to involve you in excessive attention seeking.

- Allow unknown adults access to children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable. Visitors should always be accompanied by an approved person.
- Allow strangers to give children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable in the group, lifts.
- Befriend children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable on social media.
- Take photographs on personal phones or cameras as this means that images are stored on personal devices.

In addition, for children and young people, must not:

- Give lifts to children you are supervising, on their own or your own (unless there are exceptional circumstances e.g. in an emergency for medical reasons or where parents fail to collect a child and no other arrangements can be made to take a child home. In such situations, the circumstances and your decision must be recorded and shared with an appropriate person at the earliest opportunity).
- Smoke or drink alcohol in the presence of children and young people.
- Arrange social occasions with children and young people (other than events which also include adult family members/carers) outside organised group occasions.

11.2 Acceptable touch

Sympathetic attention, humour, encouragement and appropriate physical contact are needed by children and adults. Some physical contact with children, particularly younger children, is wholly appropriate. The following guidelines regarding touching are suggested:

- **Always** ask permission.
- Be mindful of your body position.
- Keep everything public. A hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.
- Touch should be in response to a child's needs and not related to the worker's needs. It should be age appropriate, welcome and generally initiated by the child, not the church officer.
- Avoid any physical contact that is or could be construed as sexual and/or abusive/offensive.
- Allow the child to determine the degree of physical contact with others except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. when they need medical attention).

In addition:

- ✓ You can allow people you support to give you brief hugs if you feel comfortable with this.
- ✓ You can allow people you support to hold hands or link arms with you to help with travel and stability.
- ✓ You should discourage people you support from touching your face. You can offer your hand instead.
- ✓ You should discourage people you support from sitting on your lap. You can offer to sit side by side.

- ✓ You should avoid using touch if the person you support is very distressed and is unlikely to tolerate it.

Ensure that church officers at all levels must take responsibility for monitoring one another in the area of physical contact. They should be encouraged to challenge one another if necessary. Concerns about possible abuse or inappropriate behaviour should always be reported.

11.3 Children's activities




Church groups that involve children need to ensure good practice standards across a wide range of areas including: recruitment of activity leaders; DBS checking; staffing ratios; suitability of premises; health and safety arrangements; and facilities for children with special needs.

The minimum staffing levels for groups should be as follows⁵⁹:

0 – 2 years	1 adult to 3 children	1:3
2 – 3 years	1 adult to 4 children	1:4
4 – 8 years	1 adult to 6 children	1:6
9 – 12 years	1 adult to 8 children	1:8
13 – 18 years	1 adult to 10 children	1:10

Each group should have at least two workers, even for smaller groups, and if possible one male and one female. Staff ratios for all groups should always be based on a risk assessment. For example, staffing numbers would need to be increased for outdoor activities and more so if that activity is considered higher risk, potentially dangerous or when children with disabilities or special needs are involved.

For all groups and activities:

- Undertake a health and safety risk assessment (see Model Activity Risk Assessment Template )
- A registration form⁶⁰ must be completed for every child or young person who attends groups or activities which should include up-to-date information on parents' contact numbers, medical information (e.g. allergies) and any special needs (see Model Registration Form – Activities and Trips )
- An attendance register must be kept and be available at all group meetings.
- A First Aid kit must be available on any premises that are used by children.
- An accident and incident logbook must be available, and all accidents recorded. The logbook should be stored in a secure place. Any significant incidents must be recorded (e.g. a fight between children).
- There should be access to a telephone, if possible.
- In premises where children's groups meet, the Childline and Family Lives telephone numbers should be displayed (see section 13).
- Parents must sign a consent form before children are transported in a private car, and before any photography or images are taken (see Model Consent Form – Transport )

In addition, when taking children offsite⁶¹:

- The church leadership must be informed and agree to the activity.


- Details of the activity and any itinerary must be given in advance to parent/s and consent forms received in advance of the activity taking place.
- Details of the activity and a list of contacts must be left with someone in the church.
- Details of the activity and arrangements must be given to the incumbent and/or PSO.
- A risk assessment must be undertaken, and confirmation obtained that the activity is covered by PCC insurance.
- A leader must be designated to take responsibility for First Aid.

Many of these items are equally applicable to groups involving vulnerable adults.

11.4 Visiting adults

Visiting vulnerable adults in their homes is an essential element of many church officers' roles. Many parishioners will be well known to the church officer and where there have been no previous concerns, the level of risk to the church officer or parishioner during visits will usually be low. However, unexpected circumstances can be encountered, some of which may place a church officer at risk. For example, the unexpected presence in the home of a relative or friend with a history of violence or threatening behaviour. Unfortunately, case histories also show that a parishioner may be at risk from a church officer. For these reasons it is very important for parishes to ensure their church officers and parishioners are as safe as they can be, and that there is accountability and transparency in the manner in which church officers engage in lone working or visits to homes.

To assure the person you are visiting of their safety, and for your own as a church officer:

- If possible undertake a risk assessment before an initial visit, especially if you do not know the person. If there are any concerns or risks known before a visit is made, you are advised always to undertake a risk assessment (see Model Risk Assessment Checklist for Home Visiting ). In these circumstances, consider whether the visit is necessary, or whether you should be accompanied by another church officer. In addition, visiting in pairs may be advisable, especially if the adult is perceived to be vulnerable.
- Do not call unannounced; call by appointment, if appropriate telephoning the person just before visiting.
- Be clear about what support you can offer and the purpose and limitations of any pastoral care/support that is available.
- Do not make referrals to any agency that could provide help without the adult's permission, and ideally encourage them to set up the contact, unless there are safeguarding concerns.
- Never offer 'over-the-counter' remedies to people on visits or administer prescribed medicines, even if asked to do so.
- Do not accept any gifts from adults other than token items, to avoid misunderstandings or subsequent accusations from the person or their family. If someone wants to make a donation to the church, put it in an envelope, mark it on the outside as a donation and obtain a receipt from the Treasurer.
- Make a note of the date when you visit people, report back about the visit to the agreed named person and say what is concerning or going well. They will report safeguarding concerns to the Parish Safeguarding Officer and/or incumbent or directly to the DSA if they are not available.