DIOCESE of OXFORD
A Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world

Safeguarding Induction & Good Practice - Young Leaders
Guidance Document for Adult Leaders

When young people serve as leaders within their church communities, they bring a vital range of skills, enthusiasm and creativity to their roles. We know that many Young Leaders will be involved in supporting activities with children and vulnerable adults. It is therefore vital that they are not only equipped to undertake their roles safely, following good safeguarding practice, but that they are also able to identify potential signs of abuse or neglect and know how to respond to safeguarding concerns with the support of their team.

This guidance document has been created for adult leaders, who will be supervising young leaders (aged 16 & 17) when they are undertaking their roles. The guidance and scenarios can be discussed as part of the young leader's induction, alongside them completing the Safeguarding Learning Pathways required for their role.

The guidance which is highlighted within this document can be explored in more detail within the following resources:

Safer Environment and Activities (2019)

Code of Safer Working Practice (2019)

Safer Working Practices for Young Leaders

Responding to a Safeguarding concern:

Remember to:
-Listen to what is being said to you and take it seriously. Try to remain as calm as you can.
-You do not need to ask the person questions; you should just pass on what they have said to an adult leader as soon as possible, and before the end of the session.
-If the person is speaking directly to you, you can suggest that you speak to an adult leader together.
-Remember that safeguarding issues are confidential and therefore it is important that you do not share what you have been told outside of the group e.g. with friends. You can however talk to the adult leaders of the group. Sometimes it can be challenging to hear what has been shared with you so if you find it difficult, during or afterwards, then do speak to the adult leaders for support.

Safer Working Practices:

As a Young Leader you are in a position of trust and responsibility and should **remember to**:
-Treat all individuals with respect and dignity.
-Think carefully about physical contact with group members. This should be initiated by the other person and should only be what you feel comfortable with. Any touch should be open and in the line of sight of an adult leader. Think about body position e.g. can you encourage a child that wants to sit on your lap to come and sit alongside you.
-Be open about what you are doing in your role and do this alongside adult leaders.
-Ask for help and support when you need it.

Remember to not:
-Work alone with a child or vulnerable adult, even if that is accompanying a child to the toilet.
-Befriend children, young people and adults who may be vulnerable on social media. Keep contact within the organised group rather than outside.
-Take photographs on personal phones of activities you are assisting with. This needs to be organised by the group and consent needs to be obtained.
-Give lifts to children you are supervising, on their own or your own.
-Arrange social occasions with children and young people outside of organised group activities.

Diocesan Safeguarding Team
June 2025

Scenarios

1. Lucy (16) has been volunteering with Messy Church at her parish for the past six months. Generally, Lucy runs one of the activities for children and their parents alongside Rita and Sarah, who are adult leaders and who started Messy Church at the parish a few years ago. This week Messy Church are running Advent activities. Rita asks one of the groups if anyone knows the name of the special baby who comes on Christmas Day. When a couple of the group shout Jesus, Lucy hears Jack (4) tell the boy next to him 'My baby brother is coming at Christmas. Mummy is crying and Daddy shouts at her tummy.' Lucy looks around and realises that no one else has heard what has been said. Jack and the other boy carry on with the activity.

What might concern Lucy?
What should Lucy do next?

Points to discuss:
-Concern for Jack and Mum. Potential signs of emotional / domestic abuse. Domestic abuse risks increase for pregnant women.
-You are not always told directly what has happened or that there has been abuse, sometimes you hear what children say in their own words and it causes concern.
-'The Sh*t Kids Say' is an excellent video resource produced by the NSPCC which gives examples of how you can overhear what children say and some of the content may raise concerns.
-Lucy is not sure that another adult has heard. Lucy needs to ensure that Rita / Sarah / one of the adult leaders is told about what has been said as soon as possible, and by the end of the session.
-Lucy should not ask Jack questions about what has been said, just share with the adult leaders the words which were used. Lucy needs to remain calm and take it seriously.
-Adult Leaders will then take this forward.

2. Georgia (16) is a volunteer at Kids Club. Georgia really enjoys being part of the group and is also volunteering as part of her Duke of Edinburgh Award. This week, as she is getting supplies out from the Kids Club cupboard (at the back of the Kids Club room), Megan (7) who she knows well, walks up to her looking upset. Georgia says 'Hi Megan, you're looking a bit upset, has something happened.' Megan is quiet, she then hugs Georgia around the waist, looks up and says 'can I tell you a secret?'

What might concern Georgia?
What should Georgia do next?

Points to discuss:
-Georgia cannot promise to keep a secret.
-Why is Megan upset? Has something happened at Kids Club, at school, at home? If it is something serious Georgia ideally does not want to be hearing this alone.
-Georgia could respond *'How about if we go and see Tina and then you can tell us what has made you upset? I'll come with you and we can get her now.'*
-It's important that we don't leave Megan to talk to her later and that we take what she is saying seriously.
-If Megan responds, '*no I'm fine'* and goes back to the group it is still important that Georgia passes this onto an adult leader so they can decide how to respond.
-Touch has been initiated by Megan rather than Georgia. Could you move Megan to a side open hug, crouching down next to her, to talk to her about what is next. This is happening in an open space in the line of sight of other leaders.

3. Max (17) has been volunteering with the 11-12 Youth Group for the past year, which now also includes online meetings over Zoom. Following the Youth Group this evening Max receives a Direct Message on Instagram from Charlie (12) who has only joined the youth group a couple of months ago. Max can also see that Charlie wants to follow him on Instagram but at the moment Max's account is private. The DM says:
That video you shared tonight was so funny. How's college, I'm surprised you don't go to sixth form at our school. My parents were well angry after the group, said I was making too much noise, they wouldn't even let me get any food. TBH I can't do anything right. I'm feeling really low, like I did before. Thanks for being there for us.

What might concern Max?
What should Max do next?

Points to discuss:
-Max is in a position of responsibility as a young leader, it is important that he sets appropriate boundaries, including not becoming friends with anyone on social media who he is leading. Max's relationship with group members should remain within the group and should not be personal. Due to our church communities there may be group members who he already has personal contact with e.g. family friends, it is helpful to make adult leaders aware of this.
-Important that Max can have a private account which not everyone can see. Max needs to be a role model for the young people in his group, would everything on his account be appropriate to role model to a 12 year old?
-Instagram's policy is that users should be aged 13 plus but there is no age verification process.
-Max should not get into a conversation with Charlie online, it is a form of lone working even if not in person.
-Need to be open and transparent, Max should not delete the DM. Contact Adult leader to share concern. Max could also inform his parents if he is unsure of how to contact the leader.
-Charlie has shared that she is feeling low. This does not indicate immediate risk but there could be concerns of mental health issues or neglect.
-Could agree with leader if it is appropriate for Max to send an initial and final response to Charlie, but care should be taken to not give any unclear messages e.g.
I'm sorry you're feeling that way Charlie. I'm going to need to let Garry know, it's what I'd need to do if anyone in the group messaged me. I won't be able to accept your follow because I'm a leader but I'll see you at youth group next week.