



Walking with young people through
School, Community and Church life in South East Somerset.

www.linxproject.com

Guidelines for Good Practice When Working with Children/Young People

A) INTRODUCTION

All who work with children and young people have a crucial role to play in helping to shape aspects of their lives so it may enhance their future development. It is a great privilege and a unique opportunity to be able to interact with children and young people in ways that are both affirming and inspiring. This guidance has been developed from the Bath and Wells Good Practice Guidelines, with additional guidance specific to those issues faced by the Linx Project and its workers. The aim of this document is to help those who work with children and young people to establish safe and responsive environments which help to safeguard children and young people. It may also help to reduce the risk of adults being falsely accused of improper or unprofessional conduct. If we are to be a part of enabling children and young people to develop, reach their full potential and to 'have life, life in all its fullness' (John 10:10) then we need to do it as safely as we possibly can.

In *Working together to safeguard children, Every Child Matters (2006)*, the Government sets out proposals for reforming and reshaping the delivery of services for children, young people and their families in the future. The proposals in *Every Child Matters* build on existing measures to ensure that we safeguard all children and young people, especially those at risk. There are five clear, measurable outcomes that underpin all future work with children and young people. These present the faith sector with a challenge and opportunity to engage with the wider agenda for children, young people and their families.

- **Being Healthy:** enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle
- **Staying Safe:** being protected from harm and neglect
- **Enjoying and Achieving:** getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood
- **Making a Positive Contribution:** being involved with the community and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour
- **Economic wellbeing:** not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life

Every Child Matters, can be downloaded on line at www.dfes.gov.uk/everychildmatters

B) PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Careful planning and preparation of activities/sessions will help to ensure that leaders and helpers will be clearer about their roles and responsibilities.

Careful planning and preparation will help to ensure that:

- Adequate resources/equipment for activities can be obtained (where required)
- All relevant permissions can be obtained and communicated to children/young people, parents/carers, trustees and other governing bodies etc.
- Risks and safety factors can be considered and risk assessment forms filled in and recorded (see advice on five steps to risk assessment www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf)

Linx Project office, c/o Bruton Methodist Church, West End, Bruton, Somerset, BA10 0BH
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- Children with differing abilities or special needs/requirements can be identified and given further consideration. This may require looking at issues relating to access, communication and the types of resources being used.
- Consideration can be given to children/young people regardless of race, gender, ability, sexuality or religious beliefs
- Special dietary requirements can be considered and appropriately cared for
- Children/young people are regularly consulted about the service/activities that affect them or are provided for them. This will encourage greater participation

C) THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY

- It is vital that the environments where work is carried out with children/young people are safe, provide adequate facilities and areas accessible as possible
- Premises should be well maintained and comply with Health and Safety standard, this will include carrying out a risk inspection of the building, to identify potential hazards and how you are going to reduce the risk (see advice on five steps to risk assessment www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf)
- Maintenance should not be carried out during a session unless in a time of emergency i.e. clearing up broken glass, a spillage of liquid or when an electricity switch is tripped. When carrying out emergency maintenance always ensure that the immediate area around the hazard is safe and clear of children/young people. If the hazard cannot be dealt with, make the area safe around the hazard for the rest of the session, then at the first opportunity inform the relevant person who is responsible for the building and its maintenance
- Where work is carried out with children/young people there should ideally be access to toilet facilities
- Food preparation should comply with food hygiene standards (for further information www.food.gov.uk)
- There should be access to a first aid kit and the contents should be regularly checked. If any items are used or out of date they will need to be replaced, a record of any incident/accidents should also be recorded
- It is recommended that at least one member of staff should know how to administer basic first aid
- Staff need to know where the nearest telephone is for emergencies (mobiles don't always have a signal)
- Staff should know where any fire extinguishers are kept and on what type of fire they can be used (types of fire extinguishers: water, powder, foam, carbon dioxide)
- Everyone should know where the emergency exits are and where the emergency assembly point is
- Emergency exits must be clearly marked, they also need to be kept clear and accessible at all time
- Electrical equipment used during activities must be safe and in good working order. It is advised that all electrical equipment is PAT (Portable Appliance Tested). Some local electricians may be able to provide those service
- There must be adequate insurance cover for ALL on site and off site activities
- Activities should also be agreed with the Trustees
- Where possible it is advised that youth/children's groups are run in halls, churches or rooms connected with the church. If a private house is used on a regular basis, there need to be clear boundaries and rules and the Trustees / relevant PCC need to be informed.



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D) ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR OFF SITE ACTIVITIES AND RUNNING A RESIDENTIAL

Special care should be taken when organising trips and overnight stays. All must follow the safety rules and regulations stated by any activities or residential centres being visited.

- When running a residential, leaders should always leave contact details with all parents/guardians in case of an emergency. A full list of participants and contact details should also be left with an appropriate person (not attending the residential) who can be a contact point in emergency
- Those running offsite activities should ideally visit facilities or residential centres prior to the activity taking place to check out the suitability, accessibility and safety. A risk assessment can then be carried out. This is more relevant when using a facility for the first time.
- When running a residential activity special care must be given to sleeping arrangements (i.e. separate male/female/staff sleeping facilities)

E) DRIVING AND TRANSPORTATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

- Transport should only be provided when there are two adults available that have completed safe recruitment procedures, for any journey (see child protection policies and procedures).
- Two adults should be present in all journeys, ideally a Male and a Female. It is not appropriate for a Male driver to travel with all Female passengers, and it is not appropriate for a Female driver to travel with all Male passengers.
- It is inappropriate for adults to regularly offer lifts to children/young people to and from activities unless agree with parents.
- For off site trips letters outlining the trip are required along with parental consent forms.

Travel by Car

- Adequate cover for all vehicles on and off site should be assured.
- Where private vehicles are used valid and appropriate insurance should be produced and kept on record as proof of cover. Cat B insurance cover is required for use of private vehicles; this is the appropriate form of cover and allows the driver the use of the car for business purposes. Business class allows the driver of the car to use it for work purposes.
- It should be ensured that all vehicles used are legally road worthy; that capacity for the vehicle is not exceeded; seat belts are used at all times.
- All those in position of transporting young people should produce a copy of their driver's licence proving validity. It is illegal to drive any vehicle without a valid licence; this occurs when the maximum points penalty of twelve is breached. Drivers will have to follow guidelines from the place they hire when using there vehicle.

Travel by minibus

- For off site trips which require the use of a mini bus the above requirements stand.
- It is required that those driving the mini bus have undertaken prior driver training and where possible this should be proved and kept on record.
- It is necessary for those driving the mini bus to ensure luggage is stored safely and correctly.
- Policy states that on all journeys a leader should be supervising young people in the back of the mini bus.

F) IMPORTANT INFORMATION, PERMISSION AND CONSENT

Up to date relevant information, and obtaining consent is a vital part of safeguarding children and young people.

- A register of up-to-date information and contact details must be kept of the children/young people you work with. It is also recommended that up-to-date information and contact details of the staff are also kept. All must be stored safely

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- It is good practice to keep an incident/accident book where incidents or accidents can be recorded for future reference if required
- For any activities away from the normal meeting place, ensure that parents/guardians know where the group is going and that they have signed and returned the relevant consent forms (see standard consent form in this document)
- Consent will also need to be obtained if leaders are going to take photographs or videos of children/young people, especially if they are for public viewing

G) SAFE RATIOS AND GENDER REPRESENTATION

There should always be a minimum of two adult leaders at every session, ideally one male and one female. However it is recognised that this is not always possible. The table below is in line with Ofsted recommendations. Additional leaders must be present for activities away from the normal meeting place or a residential.

Age of children / young people	Maximum group size with Two Adult leaders	Additional adults required
0 – 2 years	4	There needs to be one additional adult for every additional two children
2 – 3 years	8	There needs to be one additional adult for every additional four children
3 – 8 years	16	There needs to be one additional adult for every eight children
Over 8 years	20	There needs to be one additional adult for every additional twelve children / young

H) LEADERS, VOLUNTEERS AND HELPERS

Much of the youth and children’s work that happens in the faith sector is run by a committed group of volunteers. Therefore we must ensure that:

- Inexperienced leaders / workers / volunteers and young volunteers are given clear guidance and supervision
- All who work with children / young people think and act carefully to avoid situations which could lead to difficulties, embarrassing situations, accusations or temptations
- All who work with children / young people are encouraged to participate in regular training
- Young volunteers (under the age 18) are never left on their own to run a group. Young volunteers can sign a three-way contract relating to their volunteering (see appendix in Safe Recruitment), they can also benefit from gaining accreditation (for further information on accreditation contact Somerset Youth Volunteering Network www.somersetyouth.org.uk or www.vinspired.com)
- Churches are careful when advertising for volunteers, it is better to approach potential volunteers personally, rather than having open appeals

I) CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

For more information on the Child Protection and Safeguarding, see the separate policy ‘The Linx Project Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy’

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J) PARTICIPATION AND A POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR STRATEGY

- Participation helps to create a greater sense of ownership and can positively effect the engagement and behaviour in any youth / children's club. If young people are actively involved or able to have their say about provision/services that affect them, it can also create pathways to those young people becoming volunteers
- Children and young people should also be encouraged to get involved in councils, forums, committees, PCCs, and management structures, this can enrich the provision and how it is run
- A positive behaviour strategy is to negotiate rules and consequences with the children / young people; this should be done alongside the staff as it will act as a two way agreement. Rules must be shaped to also reflect policy.
- Clear rules, consequences and boundaries help children / young people and staff to know where they stand. Staff must be consistent when dealing with rules and consequences
- Where possible, try not to discipline children / young people in front of others. It can sometime be more affective to use time out or quiet words when dealing with disruptive children / young people. Non-directive humour can sometimes help to diffuse situations in times of conflict.
- Be careful not to challenge conflict with conflict as it an make things worse or even ignite a situation
- If you have to exclude a child / young person from the group, make sure they, and a parent / guardian knows why and for how long. It is advised that excluded children / young people are offered an appropriate route to re-join the group.
- Consider allocating specific roles to staff in preparation for times of conflict / emergencies (this may help staff to know what is required of them in these types of situation)
- Be careful not to undermine other team members as it can demoralising and destructive to the team
- Staff should not use the time during a session to catch up with other staff. It is ok to chat, but staff must be mindful and alert as to what is happening with the children / young people during the session
- Effective communication with the team, parents and the children / young people always pays dividends (remember that not all communication is verbal)
- If things become unsafe or unmanageable the leaders may need time out to reflect. It can sometimes be positive to evaluate and change direction of the group if it is required. It is good practice to involve young people in this process
- A simple yet golden rule in any youth / children's group is 'If it is not safe it is not going to happen'. Programmes, participation, fun, learning and creativity are all vital aspects of our work with children and young people, however safety is paramount.

K) PHYSICAL CONTACT, TOUCH, INTERVENTIONS / RESTRAINT, COMFORTING A DISTRESSED CHILD / YOUNG PERSON

- A no touch approach for adults who work with children / young people is often impractical. Every child / young person is different and every situation is unique therefore adult leaders should maintain self awareness of the dynamic or each situation and judge what is appropriate based on the needs of the individual child / young person. Any such contact will need to be age and gender appropriate and of limited duration. Where a child / young person seeks out or initiates physical contact with an adult leader, the situation should be handled with sensitivity and must never be exploited. Physical contact should never be secretive or for the gratification of the adult
- Physical intervention should, where possible be avoided. However these are occasions when the use of physical intervention is appropriate in order to control or prevent a potentially dangerous or harmful situation. The scale of any such intervention must be proportionate to the behaviour and the nature of the harm they may cause. The minimum necessary force should be used



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L) BULLYING AND SPIRITUAL ABUSE

Bullying is any behaviour that is deliberately intended to hurt, threaten or frighten another person or group of people. It may include physical attacks, swearing and insulting comments, or deliberately leaving someone out of things. We are now also seeing an increase in cyber bullying using mobile technology.

Bullying of any kind is not acceptable, whether it is aimed at children, young people or adults. For further help, information, resources or advice see

www.childline.org.uk/extra/bullyingindex.asp

www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk

Spiritual abuse is another form of bullying and is also not acceptable as it can seriously effect the development of children / young people. This is a good definition of spiritual abuse taken from

www.spiritualabuse.org.uk/introduction.html

"Just as emotional abuse affects one emotionally and physical abuse inflicts pain and bodily injury on its victim, spiritual abuse affects one spiritually. It is the result of a spiritual leader or system that tries to control, manipulate, or dominate a person. This control is often in the form of fear. This is considered a major factor in mind control or thought reform. There are those who feel the latter comes into play in cases such as these, while others feel the thinking is the error. No matter where one stands, it does not lessen the affects of spiritual abuse."

M) YOUTH WORK AND TECHNOLOGICAL COMMUNICATIONS

Young people communicate, socialise and live in an increasingly technological world. As a project we cannot ignore this, and the place that it has in their development. As a project we have a website which is dedicated to the project. We also have a Facebook group.

In order to protect young people from harm, certain safeguards need to be in place in and we need to ensure that our conduct is appropriate. We need to make certain that above everything; young people are protected from harm, and encourage them to use technological communications appropriately and within the boundaries of our job.

As with anything issues which arises in working with young people, if a worker or volunteer feels uncomfortable or compromised in their position then they should speak with their line manager immediately.

Key Concepts and Definitions

Technological Communications

Technological communication is defined as any method of communication requiring electronics or power for it to reach young people (i.e. mobile phones are battery powered). This list includes (but is not exclusive to) mobile phones, email, websites, social networking sites (i.e. Facebook and Bebo), MSN and other internet chatting programs.



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Social Networking

Wikipedia (an online dictionary that many people can add to) defines social networking as:

'A **social network service** focuses on building online communities of people who share interests and/or activities, or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others. Most social network services are web based and provide a variety of ways for users to interact, such as e-mail and instant messaging services.'

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_networking

As a project we have a Facebook site (<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=13222590625>) which is monitored by employees of the project. This enables us to communicate with young people and have a space online, as well as our website, which will enable young people to find updates on the project, and be able to hear about events coming up, as well as see photos and feedback from past events.

Our website, www.linxproject.com, is run by volunteers who work with the project. All information which goes up onto the site is provided by workers. The project has a responsibility to ensure these volunteers are CRB cleared.

Best Practice when using Technological Communications

- There is a need to be transparent in the information we send and receive, both as a project, and individually as youth workers and volunteers.
- As workers we should use technological communication as a means of communicating, rather than chatting with young people.
- Our website will contain our logo, identifying it as our site. This will also contain a clear link to our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, setting out our practices.
- All messages, such as SMS, email, etc. should have a reference to The Linx Project.
- We will stop contact with anyone who asks us to no longer communicate with them.
- Everyone involved in communication with young people will have read and understood The Linx Project's Child Protection and Safeguarding policy
- Under no circumstances should personal information be exchanged in a public forum. If someone does, then that post should be deleted as soon as possible, or modified to remove the details. A note explaining this will then be posted.
- Any text messages or messages which are of concern to a worker should be recorded in accordance with The Safe Communications Policy
- Linx Project workers should always use their real names in communication with young people. Actual photos of workers should also be used in order to clearly identify the worker and enable the young person to know whom they are communicating with.
- All discussion boards will be monitored by Linx Project staff or volunteers
- No conversation is to be had that involves sexual or pornographic websites. If they come up the communication should either be ignored or terminated immediately.
- Any photographs used on our website should not have specific young people identified. Within our Facebook group we will not tag young people, in tagging themselves they give permission for others to identify them. If it is considered inappropriate then the tag will be deleted. Photos shall only be posted while we have sole ownership of them. All photographs should be vetted before they are posted. If anyone requests their photo to be removed this should be done so immediately.
- When using mobile phones to contact young people, then we follow the guidelines set out by The Safe Communications Policy. If workers wish for a work mobile to be provided then the project may do so, however, it shall remain the property of the project. If workers use their personal mobile phone then they need to use it appropriately and adhere to The Safe Communications Policy.
- Social networking sites should not be used to set up specific meetings with specific young people. Group invites are not considered part of this.

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Facebook Specific

- The Linx Project has a Facebook group site, which is monitored by staff, and only current employees have the facility to upload photos and links. Only staff are given the facility to accept group members. If a worker is not sure who someone is, or their suitability to join the group, then they are either rejected or ignored. This is done to protect the young people by stopping access for people trying to generate more friends through the group. If anyone is found not using the group appropriately then they shall be removed from the group, and informed why.
- When using Facebook workers are expected not to be friends with young people under the age of 16, unless they have a work profile (optional). For adding young people between the ages of 16 and 18 this should be at the workers discretion, and should ideally not be with a young person with whom they have a live working relationship.