



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

[www.linxproject.com](http://www.linxproject.com)

## **ONE TO ONE WORKING POLICY**

### **A) ONE TO ONE WORK**

While we do not predominantly seek to work with young people on a one to one basis as a project, we recognise that sometimes that additional support is needed. This policy is in place for when a worker feels that this is required and it is within their ability to support the young person. This should always be in place for supporting the young person, and not to fulfil the needs of a worker. Where possible this should also be done in support with other professionals, including going with a young person to seek that support, providing they have that permission.

A worker should never feel that they have to work with a young person in a one to one context. Although we are here to support young people to reach their full development in many different contexts, there are still others who are able to take on that role. Workers should never do anything in meeting with young people which leaves them feeling compromised. If this is the case they should speak to their Line Manager as soon as possible to discuss the issue and either a way forward, or a way of finding other support which is more appropriate.

### **B) SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE ON A ONE TO ONE BASIS**

Counselling today can be roughly divided into three levels

**Completely informal:** This is the sort of chat that goes on in every youth or children's work. Young people talking about their problems, having a moan and probably feeling better for it. One of the unique aspects of Christian Youth and Children's work is that young people do not tend to think in terms of counselling sessions and often they will express some very 'heavy' issues in a very informal context. If they want to talk about it it's going to come out.

**Active listening:** This is not counselling but is the foundation of any counselling. Active listening is a simple way of learning to listen better. Many youth and children's workers are already naturally good at this but it is an excellent idea to hone these skills. This is a good level to aim at for any youth or children's worker.

**Counselling:** This is a professional skill that can be learnt at quite a low level or even up to certificate, diploma or degree level. Any training is of course useful but like many professions the more you learn, the more you will realise how little you really know and you may well want to go on further.

Any worker involved in one-to-one work needs to clearly identify which level of support the young person is needing, and consider whether they have the skill set and ability to deal with the issues being discussed. If not, the worker needs to seek out appropriate support and pass the responsibility on. This does not mean that the youth worker disengages with the young person, but keeps it on a manageable and appropriate level.

### **C) MEETING ARRANGEMENTS**

The youth worker's line manager ought to be aware of any counselling arrangements made between a young person and a youth worker. It may be more appropriate for counselling to be undertaken by someone else, with everyday care and support being provided by the youth worker. It is important that the two kinds are not confused.



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## **D) SAFE PRACTICE**

### **Note Taking**

Write notes of counselling sessions. Where there are issues of child protection, such notes are evidence and may be needed in a court case. In any counselling situation, note-keeping will help you and the young person keep focussed on the issues they need help with. You may choose not to take notes during the session but you should write up your notes from the meeting immediately afterwards. Decide on your policy for viewing notes. For data-protection purposes you should state that the young person is free to look at the notes you have written and that all notes are kept in a secure place, although you will refer to them, for example, when receiving supervision.

### **The Vulnerability of the Young Person**

They have come to talk to you at a time of need, perhaps deep distress. You are in a powerful position. Do not abuse it by putting pressure on the young person to act, speak or think in a particular way. Do not misuse any spiritual gifts by saying (for example) "God has told me that you are on drugs, being bullied etc." when the young person has not told you what is worrying them. In deciding whether to allow same sex or male to female counselling you should follow the procedures that apply from the child protection policy laid down by your organisation.

### **Touch**

Be extremely careful about physical contact with a young person. They may have been abused in the past, either physically, sexually or emotionally and may not know how to respond to what you regard as a comforting hug or hand-squeeze. It is better to ask if someone needs a hug and it should not be because you feel that a hug is what you would want. The young person may be confused by touch and feel that you are making sexual overtures to which they must respond.

### **Emotional and Mental Safety of the Young Person**

Some of the young people that you come into contact with may be very "fragile". There may be a history of self-harm, suicide attempts, extreme displays of anger or deep distress. In these circumstances, for their safety (and your protection) never be in a building on your own with them. Always have someone you can call on for support and be sure that you have informed this person that you are on the premises and why you are there. Consider whether it is possible to be visible but not heard. The young person may feel more secure knowing that others are around – even if they might be a bit embarrassed about crying loudly or voicing feelings.

### **Boundaries**

Clear boundaries need to be agreed by all parties. This includes an understanding with parents / carers where possible. This is **essential** for young people whom we work with under 16 in a one to one context. The reason for meeting needs to be clearly understood by the youth worker, young person and parents / carers. The expected time length for meetings (total length of weeks / sessions) should be outlined from the beginning. It is better to agree an extension than continue meeting longer than is appropriate. Expectations on confidentiality should also be set out. This includes young people understanding the reasons why a youth worker cannot offer total confidentiality, along with what information may be shared with parents / guardians, other youth workers or other interested parties. If it is necessary these boundaries can be written up into an agreement and signed by the relevant parties.

### **Line Management**

For any worker who engages in one-to-one work, their line manager must be informed, and line management of the process must be undertaken. This is considered essential practice within counselling.



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### **Timing of Counselling Sessions**

Ensure that the young person knows how long a session is likely to be – generally no more than an hour and with younger-aged children, probably less. If a session needs to be longer, do make certain that others know so that arrangements such as transport home and, if during a youth event, management issues are covered.

### **Counselling**

The young person may want to sit and chat over a coffee, pray about what is troubling them, sit and cry for half an hour or walk around raging at what has been happening to them. Try to work within their framework and make sure you are comfortable about their expression of feelings.

## **E) SPECIFIC SITUATIONS**

There may be specific issues which may be faced. This does not mean that workers either feel that they have to deal with these issues if they are uncomfortable, or that they should feel obliged to. In most cases, it will be best practice to work with other professionals to support the young person to resolve their issues.

### **Self harm / Suicidal thoughts disclosed when working with children and young people**

If in working with a young person, either in a group scenario or when working in a one to one situation, they disclose self-harm or suicidal thoughts to a worker, then the following guidelines are in place for dealing with a situation.

- Make sure that in the immediate situation the young person is safe, i.e. The first principle of First Aid
- Help them treat the injury (if possible) e.g. plaster or bandage
- If the self-harm is serious e.g. drug overdose, then call the emergency services
- Stay calm, don't get angry. Offer help
- Try to understand why they are doing it (i.e. triggers) and find out if they would be prepared to talk to someone or seek counselling
- Seek professional advice if necessary
- Do not offer more support unless you feel comfortable and that it is within your ability

For more information there are the following resources:

[http://www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk/teens/life/features/health\\_illnesses/self\\_harm.html](http://www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk/teens/life/features/health_illnesses/self_harm.html)

<http://www.teenissues.co.uk/self-harm-self-help.html>

<http://www.youthinformation.com/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=90471>

There are also resources on the shelves in the office for working with teenagers.