

Writing a Code of Behaviour for those who work with children and young people

We encourage churches to adopt a code of behaviour for all who are appointed to work with children and young people so that all children and young people are shown dignity, fairness and afforded the protection that is due to them.

We outline in this section those elements that we believe should be part of any code of conduct, and have made recommendations about where we believe boundaries can be set to promote the welfare and safety of children and young people.

In developing and updating any code of behaviour, we recommend that the leaders involve and consult with all workers in discussing what is deemed to be acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. This will mean that the boundaries are widely owned by those who will implement them, recognising that safeguarding children and young people is the responsibility of the whole church. It is also possible, with some care, to involve the children and young people in some elements of this process.

Good practice is in place to enable churches to provide enjoyable and fun activities and learning to children and young people within a safe environment. These are the standards we would want to operate because we strive to do the very best for children and young people.

While the code of behaviour is first and foremost about protecting children and young people, it will also serve to safeguard workers from false accusation or unnecessary and unwarranted suspicion.

Respecting Children and Young People

The following bullet points set out examples of the kind of statements that might be included in a code of behaviour for workers.

In addition to this list of bullet points, specific guidance needs to be established with respect to workers avoiding instances when they are alone with children and young people; appropriate and inappropriate physical contact with children and young people; abuse of trust; and electronic communication.

- Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity
- Use age appropriate language and tone of voice. Be aware of your own body language, what this may be communicating and the impact this might have on the individual child or young person
- Actively listen to children and young people. Be careful not to assume you know what a child or young person is thinking or feeling. Listen to what is spoken and

reflect back what they have said in age appropriate language to ensure you have understood. At the same time, observe their body language to better understand what is being said. NSPCC research (2013) with children who disclosed abuse showed that fear of not being listened to, understood, taken seriously, or being believed were some of the barriers to sharing worries with adults.

Intimate / personal care

- Do not engage in any of the following:
- invading the privacy of children or young people when they are using the toilet **or** washing
 - Make sure another adult is present if, for example, a child has soiled themselves needs changing / washing. If possible, the child's own parent or carer should be called in to carry out such a task

Social interaction

- Do not engage in any of the following:
 - Games involving physical contact between a leader and a child or young person
 - Do not make suggestive remarks or threats to a young person, even in fun
 - sexually suggestive games
 - making inappropriate or sexually suggestive comments about or to a child or young person, even in 'fun'
 - scapegoating, belittling, ridiculing, rejecting or any action that may cause humiliation or embarrassment to a child or young person.
- When it is necessary to put boundaries in place to manage behaviour or keep children and young people safe, this should be done without using physical punishment. (A situation may, however, arise where a child or young person needs to be restrained in order to protect them or a third person. Should this happen, a written report should be submitted to your DPS, and discussion undertaken with the child / young person's care givers. A risk assessment should be considered, with support of the PSL, parent/ carer and child / young person in order to reduce likelihood of future restraint).
- Do not respond to, or encourage, excessive attention-seeking that is overtly sexual or physical in nature.
- Be aware that children can use behaviours to communicate feelings and concerns, and should any behaviours appear to be overtly sexual or physically risky in nature, then report your concerns and seek advice from your church DPS in the first instance.
- Workers should not normally plan to be alone with children and young people. Plan activities that involve more than one other person being present, or at least are within sight and hearing of others. This should be a key guiding principle for good practice.



For more information on guidance for working with children and young people from the NSPCC:

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/1079/safeguarding-standards-and-guidance.pdf>

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