

Off-site visits, sleepovers and transporting vulnerable groups

1. Day Visits

It can be very beneficial for vulnerable people (children, young people and vulnerable adults) to make visits to places outside the usual meeting place. These work very well when carefully planned. It is advisable to follow the following steps.

Before you go:

- Plan where you want to go and what you want to do and see while you are there
- Inform the PCC so they can ensure that the parish has adequate insurance cover for the activities
- Send a letter with all relevant information to parents/carers along with a consent form (details should include: timings, accompanying adults, mode of transport, activities)
- Visit the venue and carry out risk assessments for the journey and all activities (some venues will have generic risk assessments that can be used as a starting point)
- Consider any additional risks / needs associated with those with consent to take part
- Ensure that all consent forms have been received (**never** take a child on a visit without consent)
- Compile a list of any specific medical needs and emergency contact numbers to take with you on the day. Copies of these details must be left with a nominated person in the parish. (This could be the Church Safeguarding Officer, Parish Administrator or Parish Priest)
- Ensure that you have an adequate number of adults to meet supervision ratios for the visit and allocate groups of vulnerable people to each pair of adults. For some activities there will be a need for a higher ratio than in church halls. Try to include a trained First Aider.
- Ensure that a properly equipped first aid kit is available for use on the day

On the day:

- Ensure that all adult leaders who are supervising have clear instructions for the day and know what to do in the event of an emergency or if they have a concern
- Ensure that all leaders have access to a mobile phone with contact details of the other leaders and the contact person in the parish

- Leave a list of those on the visit with the designated person in the parish (vulnerable people and adult leaders) along with an itinerary for the day
- Remember to take the First Aid Kit and emergency contact details / health information for participants
- ENJOY!

2. Residential Visits

Most established residential centers will have staff carefully appointed and vetted through the safer recruitment process (including DBS disclosures) and will have carried out risk assessments for their activities. They should also have a Safeguarding Policy. It is worth checking that this is the case and asking for sight of their policy. The process is similar to that above with the addition of the following:

- Once planned, full details of the proposed holiday along with a full risk assessment should be presented to the Parochial Church Council (PCC) for approval and to ensure the parish has adequate insurance cover
- **All** adults attending as leaders must have been recruited according to the Safer Recruitment Guidelines and be clear about their specific responsibilities during the visit
- Any serious incident must be immediately reported to the designated person in the parish
- Written confirmation should be obtained confirming that the premises has adequate: Insurance, Food and Hygiene Certificates, First Aid Kit and First Aider on site, Fire Precautions, Employers and Public Liability insurances
- On arrival, leaders should ensure that they are familiar with fire procedures and the location of fire exits. Any risks identified should be reported immediately. If not suggested by the venue, it is wise to carry out a fire drill soon after arrival.

Additional considerations for residential visits with children or young people

General

- No child under the age of eight should be allowed on a residential visit without being accompanied by a parent/carer
- Parental consent must include the authority for the group leader to “act as a careful parent would” in case of emergency – this does not transfer parental rights in any way
- Information provided to parents / carers must include:
 - the aims and objectives of the visit and activities to be carried out
 - the date of the visit and its duration

- the details of the venue including accommodation to be used
 - all travel arrangements
 - name and contact details of the group leader (before and during the event)
 - information regarding financial, medical and insurance arrangements and
 - an emergency contact number for someone in the parish who will be able to take calls for the duration of the visit
- As with off-site day visits, you will need to be aware of where each child / young person is at any point both on and off the site on which you are staying.
 - Record any significant incidents (it's worth considering a Daily Log detailing activities etc.)
 - All electrical equipment used must have been PAT (portable appliance testing) tested – children should be encouraged to bring only battery operated equipment when acceptable.

Accommodation

- Adults should not share sleeping arrangements with children/young people but should be in close proximity
- Male and female members must have both separate sleeping accommodation and washing facilities
- Mixed gender groups should have both male and female adult leaders to accompany the group on the visit
- Until all children have settled down to sleep for the night, there should be two adults on duty (on a rota basis)

Additional considerations for residential visits with vulnerable adults

- Vulnerable adults should be given the information detailed above (information to be given to parents)
- The vulnerable adult should be fully involved in the planning stage for any residential trip – if they are unable to voice their own opinions then they should have a representative to do this on their behalf (a family member for instance)
- There should be a minimum of two leaders but more should be involved in order to ensure that the visit is both safe and enjoyable
- Additional considerations need to be given to:
 - an appropriate venue and accommodation
 - the length of the journey and transport used
 - affordability
 - how close the venue is to the facilities that may be required e.g. doctors, hospitals

- A written declaration of their health needs should be completed where complex needs exist and support will be required

3. Sleepovers at church

Parishes sometimes want to organise sleepovers for young people or may want to use their buildings to provide overnight accommodation during pilgrimages or missions. Children and young people enjoy the excitement of a sleepover and by taking a few sensible precautions all can enjoy the experience.

Similar processes need to be followed as with 'Residential Visits' above but the following issues will need to be considered in addition to these:

- The insurance cover on the building must be adequate – any limits on numbers must be taken into consideration
- Fire exits and extinguishers must be accessible
- The adult leaders should find out where water, electricity and gas can be turned off if necessary; a torch is a useful item to have to hand
- There must be a qualified First Aider in attendance along with a correctly stocked First Aid kit
- There must be an appropriate number of leaders attending, all of who should have been appointed through safer recruitment processes. Try to ensure the gender balance in leaders reflects those taking part (i.e. if there is a mixture of boys and girls, there should be both male and female leaders wherever possible)
- Adults should not sleep in the same room as children / young people unless it is appropriate for the care and supervision of the children / young people. Where adults are not sleeping in the same room / space, it may be appropriate to carry out random night patrols
- Changing and showering facilities must be single sex and separate for adults and children to ensure privacy. If there are limited facilities, a timetable for the use of these will need to be drawn up.

4. Transporting vulnerable groups

In order to take part in off-site activities it may be necessary to use coaches, mini buses, parent's cars or public transport. Where children, young people or vulnerable adults are being transported, the parish needs to ensure there are guidelines in place and that these

apply to all drivers and journeys carried out on behalf of and with the knowledge of the parish. This does not apply to private arrangements for transportation made, for example, between parents.

Consent must always be obtained from parents/carers before the activity takes place.

Vulnerable adults should also give their consent to being transported (prior consultation with carers may be necessary).

The following points should be taken in to account.

Coach Travel

- Only coaches fitted with seat belts should be used
- Every passenger must have a seat
- Seat belts must be worn throughout the journey
- Care should be taken when assisting children or vulnerable adults when boarding / alighting coaches, both to ensure safety on the road and in considering any physical contact

General Points on Voluntary Drivers

- All those driving children, young people or vulnerable adults on behalf of the church must be over 25 years of age and have held a full, current driving licence for more than two years
- Any driver who has endorsements on their licence should inform the Church Safeguarding Officer before undertaking any voluntary driving; they should seek advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser to ensure it would be appropriate to use them
- Any driver with unspent convictions for unsafe driving (drink driving, dangerous driving or racing on the highway) must not transport children, young people or vulnerable adults
- All those volunteering to drive children, young people or vulnerable adults in their own vehicles must complete the form below and produce their driving licence, insurance certificate and MOT certificate before they are allowed to volunteer in this way

Mini Buses

- Ensure that the proposed driver is over 25 years of age, has a current full driving licence and is entitled to drive a minibus
- Ensure that there is a passenger escort to accompany the driver
- Any other accompanying adults should be distributed throughout the minibus
- Children should not sit on front seats
- All passengers must use a seatbelt (mini buses without seat belts must not be used)
- Any luggage should be stowed away securely without blocking any gangways or exits (or luggage transported separately)
- Ensure that leaders carry a mobile phone for emergency contact
- Any defects or incidents should be recorded and fixed as soon as possible if the minibus belongs to the parish
- Regular drivers of minibuses should be encouraged to take a MiDAS (Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme) test, organised by the Community Transport Association U.K. (CTA). Further information is obtainable from www.ukroadsafety.co.uk/midas

Car Travel

- All drivers must confirm in writing that they are adequately insured (this must cover voluntary work), that their vehicle has an up-to-date MOT certificate (if applicable) and that they have a full, current, clean driving licence
- Only cars fitted with rear seat belts will be used
- All children will travel in the rear seats and, where necessary (when a child is below the minimum height of 135cms/under 12 years of age) a booster seat is provided and used (together with a seat belt) throughout the journey
- Every passenger will have a seat and wear a seatbelt throughout the journey
- Ensure that children / vulnerable adults leave the car on the pavement side only
- A second adult should accompany the driver in case of emergencies. In an emergency, if a driver has to transport one child or vulnerable adult on his / her own, the child or vulnerable adult must sit in the back of the car

Travel on Public Transport

- Higher adult: child ratios are recommended to ensure safety
- For trains, the party should be distributed to use different doors but 2 groups to remain together to enable one adult to be first on / off and another last on / off
- Supervising adults will endeavour to negotiate seats, shared if necessary, for all children who, once seated, must then remain seated throughout the journey. Parents should be informed before giving their consent, that public transport seating cannot be guaranteed
- Ensure that both children and adults are aware of where to report to / seek help from if a child gets lost.