

Horsecastle Chapel

Horsecastle Youth Team Policy Document

Horsecastle Youth Team: Policy Document

1. Introduction

Our great desire is to bring the gospel to children and young people and for that gospel to bring them to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the Youth Team's reason for being! It does not exist to give us all something to do, to mind children or simply to entertain them (enjoyable as that is!) Neither does it primarily exist to build friendships into the community or even to give the children some moral teaching (although we hope it does so). The Youth Team exists for the sake of each individual child because each one of them needs Christ. That means they need Leaders and Helpers who know Jesus Christ, tell them about Him and pray for them.

More than anything our children and young people need the mercy and grace of our ever blessed God and Saviour – to whom this attempt to put into writing our policies for good practice at the clubs is humbly offered.

The Children Act 1989 was a significant reform of legislation relating to children and has had an impact on all organisations working with children, including churches.

One of the sections of the Act of most relevance to churches is that relating to work with children under the age of 8. The guide-lines provide an example of good practice and high standards and are commended as standards of excellence for all age groups.

Any organisation, which arranges activities for under 8s (where parents are absent), lasting for more than two hours and taking place on more than 6 days a year, is required to register with the Local Authority.

Quite apart from any duties placed upon us by legislation we have a higher duty to God. It is this duty that must be foremost in our care of children. This means that our standards will not simply be those which are set for us by legislation (although all of these *must* be met) or those set by parental or societal expectation (although we ought to meet these too, so that the work is above reproach). In addition to meeting these other standards we will be concerned for what is right and best. *So where necessary our standards ought to exceed those of the legislators and society at large.*

2. Youth Team Leaders and Workers

1. Leaders and helpers must ordinarily be members of the church
2. Leaders and helpers should be over 18 years of age. It is possible to have help from young people under 18 years of age, provided they are under adult supervision. Helpers under 18 shall not be counted in the adult/child ratio.
3. Before Leaders and helpers are appointed they must complete the Youth Team Application Form (see Appendix 1). The form covers basic personal information as well as including specific questions relating to offences against children (and adults). Once completed the form must be returned direct to Greg Cruse or Andrew Johnstone. No one may be appointed to work with

the Youth Team without clearance from the Elders. The Elders may also request a member of the Team to step down if necessary.

4. On applying for a position with the Youth Team all applicants in regulated activity or who are unsupervised will have to apply for an Enhanced Criminal Records Check through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) (see para.12 for detailed information). This is a simple procedure (one simple form to complete) and is paid for by the church. This check will have to be done before an appointment can be made.
5. It is important that good order is maintained at each club or activity. Leaders and helpers need to be aware that **great care** must be taken when disciplining children and with any physical contact with them (see para.6.6).
6. All leaders and helpers should be willing to attend Youth Leaders meetings as arranged and undertake such training events as the Elders feel are beneficial, particularly in-service training events.
7. All new leaders and helpers are required to familiarise themselves with this policy before commencing their service in the Youth Team.

3. Programmes and Consent

1. The leaders in charge of each of the different works within the Youth team (i.e. Friday Club, All Sorts, etc.) must ensure, as far as possible, that parents or guardians of children attending activities of the church are aware of the nature of the activities planned *before* they send their child. Wherever possible, detailed programmes should be printed and given to all parents/guardians by the beginning of each term/half term.
2. Parental 'Youth Work Consent Forms' (see Appendix 2) must be filled in by a parent/guardian for each child wishing to attend any club or activity. These forms must then be stored safely and all leaders and helpers of the relevant club/activity must know where they are in case of an emergency.
3. Leaders and helpers should familiarise themselves with the Consent Forms and be aware of any medical conditions (included on the forms) that might affect a child's ability to take part in an activity. It is the group leaders' responsibility to brief the other leaders where a child has such a condition. In such circumstances sensitivity needs to be shown, remembering that the information on the form is confidential and the child might not want his/her situation made known.

4. Usual Staff Ratios

4.1 On Site Activities

Children under 7 years – two adults for up to 8 children and one additional adult for each additional 8 children or part thereof.

Children over 7 years – two adults for up to 8 children and one additional adult for each additional 12 children or part thereof.

(Both male and female leaders must be present on the premises whilst activities for mixed-sex groups are taking place)

4.2 Off -Site Activities (General)

Children under 8 years – one adult for every 4 children, or part thereof.

Children 8-11 years – one adult for every 6 children, or part thereof.

Children over 11 years – one adult for every 8 children, or part thereof.

(Both male and female leaders must be present at all activities for mixed-sex groups)

4.3 Swimming

Particular care needs to be taken when planning swimming events. Please note the following

- Swimming cannot be allowed without a fully trained Life-Guard.
- At least 2 male leaders and 2 female leaders are needed for mixed groups
- The adult to child ratio (in the water) should be 1 adult for every 4 children or part thereof.
- Some swimming pools have more stringent requirements about adult to child ratios. These need to be checked in advance and complied with.
- Attention must be given to the swimming ability of the group and a higher adult to child ratio adopted where appropriate.

5. First Aid

1. There must always be a sufficient number of appropriately trained First Aiders within the Youth Team so that a First Aider can be appointed for each activity. The church will fund suitable training for members of the Youth Team so that this is possible.
2. The leaders in charge of each of the different works within the Youth Team are responsible for ensuring that First Aid will be available to the children attending the activity at all times. To do this the leader must have an appointed First Aider at each activity.
3. There shall be two properly stocked First Aid Kits for Youth Team use. One will remain on the Church premises and the other will be for Off-Site use. An Accident Book shall be kept with each Kit. Should items be used from the First Aid Kit the First Aider should arrange for the Kit to be replenished as soon as possible (and where appropriate before the next Youth Team activity).

4. The appointed First Aider for each session shall ensure that a First Aid Kit is available for each session and shall be released from other responsibilities to deal with an incident if it arises.
5. Any incident or accident requiring First Aid, however, minor, should be recorded in the Accident Book by the appointed First Aider.
6. Wherever an incident or accident has taken place the Leader in charge of the activity must ensure that the parents/guardian of the child are informed directly at the end of the session or by telephone or visit as soon as possible thereafter.

6. Safe Practice

We work in accordance with the document **Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with children and young people**

1. A neat and 100% accurate Attendance Register of children and leaders must be kept for every activity and completed at the start of the session. The leader in charge must always keep the register close to hand throughout the session in case of an emergency (or delegate the task to another suitable leader).
2. Leaders and helpers should be aware of the location of fire appliances, emergency exits and their Evacuation Procedures (which need to be talked through with the children and where appropriate occasional Fire Drills need to be held).
3. On arrival prior to an activity leaders should check all rooms for any hazards (e.g. stacks of chairs that may fall over, blocked fire exits etc.)
4. In planning activities it is the responsibility of the Youth Team to ensure that such activities do not present any undue risk to the children or leaders.
5. All equipment used should be in good order so as not to be dangerous for the children.
6. Leaders and helpers must take care in their **personal interaction** with the children and young people. Leaders must not assume that their own style of interaction with or discipline of, children is appropriate within the Youth Team. The way we deal with children must be right, fit the context and be consistent across the team. Leaders and helpers must observe the following rules of thumb –

- **do not be alone**

There are some *exceptional* situations when being alone with a child (or 2) is unavoidable. However every care should be taken to avoid this wherever possible. If you do have to take a child into another room (for example because they have been removed from the main activity for misbehaviour – and discipline in the main room has proved impossible) always tell another leader that you are going *and* stay in view of those in the main activity (e.g. by leaving a door open).

- **do not be physical**

Care should be taken with physical contact – it can be misinterpreted. All leaders need to take care not to allow the children or young people to involve them in attention seeking that is physical in nature.

Discipline at the clubs must never be physical. If a child does have to be physically restrained from fighting it should be done as gently as possible.

7. Leaders and helpers should look out for each other during clubs and activities to provide each other with support e.g. do not stand around chatting to other leaders when there is work to do and be ready to go to the assistance of a leader if you notice they are in a vulnerable situation (e.g. alone with a child.)
8. Leaders and helpers need to be ready to learn from one another to develop their own good practice. It is everyone's responsibility to encourage an atmosphere of mutual support and care which allows all workers to be comfortable enough to discuss inappropriate attitudes and behaviour.

7. Incidents

1. Any 'significant incidents' which take place during the club or activity must be recorded by the leader in charge of the session.
2. A 'significant incident' includes
 - A fight or serious threats of violence/intimidation (towards children, staff or other adults)
 - Malicious damage to property
 - Any allegations of abuse
 - Inappropriately physical discipline by a leader or helper
 - Any other incidents which may have/could have had serious consequences (e.g. equipment failure causing injury to child).
3. The written record made by the leader in charge shall include:-
 - The date and time of the session
 - The leader in charge of the session.
 - The names, addresses and ages of those involved in the incident
 - The names of other leaders who witnessed the incident.
 - The names of other leaders who, although not witnessing the incident, were at the session.
 - The names of any children/young people who witnessed the incident (plus their ages)
 - A full description of the incident
 - Details of any action taken.
4. The record of the incident shall be given to Greg Cruse for any necessary action and safekeeping.

8. Off Site Activities (including camps)

1. Parents and guardians shall be given full details of the arrangements for any special off-site events (including camps). As much information as possible should be given about activities, transport, supervision and sleeping arrangements (where relevant) and full details of the location of the event or camp (including full address and telephone number where possible – so that parents/guardians can contact their children in an emergency).
2. A separate Consent Form for each off site activity must be obtained from parents/guardians to check they are happy for their child to attend and to obtain an emergency contact number for during the activity. (A special Camp Consent Form is included in this policy as Appendix 3).
3. The leader in charge of the off-site activity or camp must ensure that they take all relevant Consent Forms with them – and they must keep them close to hand at all times (i.e. If the group is away on a camp and goes out for the afternoon the Consent Forms must not be left at the accommodation).
4. If the children are to be taken swimming or are to participate in any other water sport, the separate consent form (see 8.2 above) must ask if the child can swim 50 metres and tread water. This allows non-swimmers and weak swimmers to be identified in advance for extra supervision in the water.
5. A First Aider shall be designated for each off site activity. The First Aider is responsible for taking the off-site First Aid Kit and Accident Book (see para. 5.3) with them on the activity. If there will be any need for medicines to be administered during the camp or other off-site activity the parent/guardian of the relevant child must give their *written* consent. The Camp Consent Form at Appendix 3 already includes a section for that consent to be given and a separate form for other occasions is set out in para.10.3 below.
6. When planning a camp or an off-site activity where children are going to be taken out of the area, leaders should establish a Home Contact Link. Ideally this should be someone who is not related to any member of the party. The designated Home Contact should be given a photocopy of all the full Consent Forms (see para 3.2) and the extra consent forms that relate specifically to the activity. In the event of a serious incident, or serious traffic delay, the leader should contact the Home Contact whose duty it is to inform the leadership of the church and the parents of the event and how matters are being dealt with. This leaves leaders free to deal with the emergency.
7. No off-site activity (especially outdoor pursuits) should be undertaken without the leaders in charge having the necessary expertise/qualifications to do it. Leaders must remember that even if arranging a countryside ramble or walk it is important that the exact route is planned before the event and a copy of that route given to the Home Contact. Designated paths must be followed at all times and dangerous routes avoided.
8. The leader in charge of any off-site activity should make sure that they, or one of their team, have a fully charged mobile phone with them on off-site activities. This number should be

given to the Home Contact Link and the parents of the children attending the activity or camp so that they can contact their child in an emergency.

9. Venues for camps or weekends away must be visited in advance to check that they are safe and suitable, and a full risk assessment undertaken.
10. When planning off-site activities (or special on-site activities such as Bouncy Castle hire) it may be necessary to check with the Church Insurers that the activity planned is covered by the Church Insurance Policy.

9. Transport

1. All vehicles used for transporting children must be registered, taxed and properly maintained, and with no dangerous items lying around (e.g. tools, knives)
2. Where children are transported in leader's cars those cars must have at least third party insurance and leaders must not travel with more passengers than their insurance allows. Leaders should inform their own insurers before transporting children in their own cars. All children must be seat-belted.
3. All drivers must adhere to the Highway Code at all times. Drivers must not exceed speed limits.
4. When transporting children it is recommended that there are two leaders (preferably 1 male, 1 female) in each vehicle. Where this is not possible the driver should arrange to carry more than one passenger. If this is not possible, and the driver is transporting only one child, he/she should arrange for the child to be seated in the rear of the car.
5. When dropping children at home after an activity the driver of the vehicle must satisfy themselves that the child is safely back home (i.e. wait to see them go in the door) before driving off. Children should be escorted to their front doors where they cannot be seen from the vehicle, or where a road has to be crossed.
6. Leaders should not administer travel sickness tablets without written parental consent (see below). In an emergency the parent should be contacted by phone and another leader should be present to hear the parent's verbal suggestions or consent – a short written record of the call should then be signed by the two leaders and kept with the child's consent forms.

10. Medicines

1. We are unable to give medication to children at our activities without written consent from a parent or guardian.
2. As far as camps/weekends away are concerned, there is already provision for obtaining the necessary consent on the Camp Consent Form at Appendix 3.

- 3. If requested to administer medication at any other activities (either on-site or off-site) the following Medicines Consent Form must be completed and signed by a parent or guardian in advance.

Medicines Consent Form

We are unable to give medication to your child without your prior written consent. If you want us to administer medication would you please give details below:

- 1) Medication currently being taken and details of when it needs to be taken and at what dose

2) I give my permission for _____ (leader’s name) to administer the above Medication to my child (unless you tell us otherwise we will leave your child to administer his/her own inhaler(s))

Signed _____ (Parent/Guardian)

Dated _____

Please print name _____

- 4. In receiving a request to administer medication either in an emergency or at other times, regard needs to be had as to the nature of that medical help. Certain medical assistance can only be given by a qualified professional. Every request must therefore be assessed carefully and if appropriate discussion must take place with the parents/guardians.

11. Child Abuse

Sadly we recognise that many children are abused. Leaders and helpers in the Youth Team should be familiar with some of the possible signs of abuse and have some understanding of how to react if a child starts to talk personally about the subject.

1. Recognising the Possible Signs of Abuse

The following behavioural signs MAY be indications of child abuse, but they should not be taken in isolation. Remember that abuse can be by physical injury, emotional abuse, neglect or sexual abuse.

Physical Signs

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Injuries which occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls or rough games etc.
- Injuries which have not received medical attention
- Neglect – under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food, untreated illness, inadequate care

- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains
- Bruises, bites, burns, fractures etc. which do not have an accidental explanation
- Cuts/scratches/substance abuse

Indicators of Possible Sexual Abuse

- Any allegations made by a child concerning sexual abuse
- Child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour, or who regularly engages in age inappropriate sexual play
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults
- Inappropriate bed sharing arrangements at home
- Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with sexual connotations
- Eating disorders – anorexia, bulimia

Emotional Signs

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clinging. Also depression/aggression/extreme anxiety.
- Nervousness, frozen watchfulness
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
- Persistent tiredness
- Running away/stealing/lying

It is important that these possible signs are not taken as indicating that abuse has taken place, but they ought to make us concerned and alert.

2. Reacting to a Child

General Points

- LISTEN! Be accepting of what the child says (however unlikely the story may sound)
- Keep calm, look at the child directly.
- Tell the child you will need to tell someone else – do not promise confidentiality.
- Even when the child had broken a rule they are not to blame for the abuse.
- Be aware that the child may have been threatened or bribed not to tell
- Never push for information and don't ask leading questions. If the child decides not to tell you after all, then accept that and let them know you are always ready to listen.

Helpful things to say

- You did the right thing to tell me
- I am glad that you have told me
- I take what you say very seriously
- I will help you

Do not say

- Why didn't you tell anyone before
- I can't believe that!
- Are you sure this is true?
- Why? When? How? Who? Where?
- I'm shocked
- Don't tell anyone else
- Never make false promises

Concluding

Reassure the child or young person that they were right to tell you.

Let them know what you are going to do next and that you will let them know what happens (you may feel you need to refer the matter before the child leaves to go home if you consider them to be seriously at risk of further abuse).

You should then

- Make Notes** -as soon as possible (preferably within an hour of speaking to the child) writing down exactly:
- What the child or young person said
 - When he/she said it
 - What was happening immediately beforehand (description of activity)
- Record** - dates and times of these events and when you made the record.
- Keep** -all hand written notes, even if subsequently typed up.

Then

**Report the situation IMMEDIATELY to Greg Cruse or Andrew Johnstone
Do not discuss your suspicions or allegations with anyone else**

If neither of these people are available and you are concerned a child might be at risk of harm contact the local authority Single Point of Access (SPA) 01275 888808 or the police on 101. Then notify Greg Cruse or Andrew Johnstone as soon as reasonably practicable.

12. Police Checks and Criminal Record Information

1. As posts within the Youth Team involve substantial, unsupervised contact with children, all applicants who we intend to appoint will be asked to submit to a criminal records check before the position can be confirmed. Applicants will be asked to apply for an Enhanced Disclosure Check through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)/Scottish Criminal Records Office (SCRO).

2. As a position within the Youth Team is exempted under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act this check will reveal any details of cautions, reprimands, or final warnings, as well as formal convictions. This process is subject to a strict code to ensure confidentiality, fair practice and security of any information disclosed.
3. The DBS/SCRO Code of Practice is available on request and our own procedures are set out below. It is stressed that a criminal record will not necessarily be a bar to appointment. Only if the nature of any matters revealed could be considered to place children or vulnerable adults at risk will we be unable to appoint you.
4. Would-be leaders and helpers in the Youth Team are asked to understand why we have to have these procedures in place and know that any decision taken about their application is in no way related to the love the church has for them and their worth within the fellowship as a fellow believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Many other important avenues of service within the church lie open to an applicant who is unable to join the Youth Team.

The following sub-paragraphs relate to our handling of information disclosed by the police check, including storage, use and disposal of that information.

5. As a church we are very anxious that any members, about whom we will receive information in this way, are sure that the details that are received will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and will in no way affect the love and value of the applicant in the mind and hearts of the Pastor and Elders who obtain the information. In addition the church will gladly comply with the approach of the Code of Practice published under Section 122 of the Police Act 1997 which covers the use of disclosed information. In accordance with the code the church will:
 - 5.1 – make sure members are not unfairly discriminated against because of the information revealed by the check.
 - 5.2- make sure members wanting to join the Youth Team are given a copy of this policy before applying so that they are made aware that a police check will have to be carried out if they apply.
 - 5.3 – make sure members applying realise that a criminal record will not necessarily stop them joining the Youth Team.
 - 5.4- make sure that information revealed by the check is discussed with the member if it will prevent them joining the Youth Team.
 - 5.5- make sure that the information received is not passed to any person who is not authorised to receive it under section 124 of the Police Act 1997. We understand it is an offence under the Act to do so. Therefore the information will be disclosed only to those persons whose duties require them to be acquainted with it. In most cases that will mean Greg Cruse or Andrew Johnstone only. If that is not the case the applicant will be told in advance of the intention to discuss the matter with the other Elders (at which

point the applicant is free to withdraw the application if they wish to avoid the information going further).

5.6- make sure that the information is stored securely.

5.7- make sure the information supplied by the check is not retained for longer than is required for the particular purpose for which it was obtained. Unless there are exceptional circumstances to justify retaining the information for a longer period, this should be no longer than six months after appointment.

5.8- make sure that Disclosure Information is disposed of securely by shredding, pulping or burning.

13. Review

This policy will be subject to intermittent review by the Elders. Comments and suggestions from members of the Youth Team would be very much appreciated as a part of that process.

May the Lord be with us as we seek to serve Him together

This policy was adopted by the
Elders and Deacons of Horsecastle Chapel on the 17.10.13