



Responsible Caring Guide for working with young people at Hexham Abbey

This Guide is issued to support those who work with young people under the age of 18 at Hexham Abbey. Copies are available from the Abbey's Parish Office and from the Abbey's website at www.hexhamabbey.org.uk

Throughout the Guide, reference is made to specific sections of the Diocese of Newcastle's [Child Protection Policy and Guidelines](#), copies of which can also be referenced in the Abbey's Parish Office and which can also be accessed from the Diocesan website at www.newcastle.anglican.org/info/child_protection.htm

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Written by: Chris Milner
Approved by: Hexham Abbey Responsible Caring Group

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Responsible caring policy

Hexham Abbey is committed to the safe care of young people under the age of 18 and of vulnerable adults in our church community.

This responsible caring policy sets out how we will protect these vulnerable members of our church from harm; and how we will protect all those who work with them. It follows the Principles of the Church of England House of Bishop's Child Protection Policy and is based on the Child Protection Policy and Guidelines published by the Diocese of Newcastle.

Our policy is to:

- Provide a safe and welcoming environment
- Select leaders and others in key positions carefully
- Guide those who care for and teach young people
- Check activities are suitably organised
- Ensure everyone knows how to raise any concerns about welfare
- Appoint a parish Responsible Caring Group to coordinate these responsibilities
- Check that this policy is followed

Providing a safe and welcoming environment

For all activities involving young people:

A **risk assessment** must be carried out for the activity beforehand.

A **first aid** kit, trained first-aider and telephone must be available.

An **attendance register** must be kept.

The number of **leaders** and assistants must meet Diocesan guidelines – the minimum is two who have an enhanced CRB disclosure (and, where appropriate, have been approved by the PCC) for such work. There must always be a female adult present in any activity which includes girls.

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Parents/carers must give written **medical consent** and provide contact details and information about any special needs or access restrictions beforehand.

Any **physical contact** with young people should reflect their needs, not the adult's; should take place in public; should reflect the age and understanding of the young person and should be initiated by them.

Where any **trips away** from the Abbey are organised, specific written permission for the approved leaders to act in loco parentis must be obtained from parents/carers for all young people to attend.

All **drivers** should have held a full driving licence for more than 2 years. All cars must be roadworthy and have seat belts for every person carried: and the driver must ensure that their insurance covers them for carrying young people from the Abbey on such an activity.

All **information** provided by parents/carers must be kept securely and in confidence.

All venues must have a **fire evacuation plan**, which must be practiced annually; and an annual risk assessment must be carried out for them.

Selecting leaders and others

All Abbey staff and volunteers who work with young people – or who may be seen by vulnerable adults as figures of authority – must be aged 18 or over and must obtain an **enhanced CRB**

disclosure for this role, before starting work. This disclosure must be renewed at intervals in accordance with Diocesan guidance.

New leaders or assistant leaders for Junior Church, Crèche or Youth Groups must also have provided satisfactory **references** for their positions of care and teaching and must be **approved by the PCC** before starting work.

The PCC must keep a list of approved and CRB-checked people and must review and **re-approve** all those on this list annually.

Guiding those who care for and teach young people

All those who work with young people and vulnerable adults at the Abbey must be given a copy of this responsible caring **policy**.

Before starting their role, each must also be given an **induction** briefing by an experienced leader, which must include how to put all elements of this policy into practice in their role.

In addition, all leaders or assistant leaders for Junior Church, Crèche or Youth Groups must be given a copy of the Abbey's Responsible Caring **Guide** for Working with Young People. The policy, the Guide and a link to Diocesan Child Protection Policy and Guidelines will be available from the Abbey's website (www.hexhamabbey.org.uk).

Checking activities are suitably organised

Approval must be given by the PCC for all Abbey activities involving young people, before the activity takes place, to confirm that all arrangements for the activity (venues, adult supervision, transport, parental consent and insurance) are satisfactory and that an appropriate risk assessment has been completed.

Approval for the **teaching** programme for Junior Church and Youth Groups must be given by the Clergy.

Where activities involve any **under-8s** and last more than 2 hours, OFSTED must be informed.

Ensuring all know how to raise concerns

Information about what to do if anyone has concerns about the welfare of any young person or vulnerable adult must be displayed on a prominent noticeboard and given to everyone who works with these groups in the Abbey.

This information should clearly identify **who to talk to**, in such an event, including an Independent Person outside the parish and the Diocesan Child Protection Officer; and the 'Childline' phone number.

Any **health and safety concerns** should be raised with the Abbey's Health and Safety Committee for resolution.

Any **accidents or injuries** should be recorded in an Accident Book.

Responsible Caring Group

The PCC has tasked a Responsible Caring Group with coordinating, promoting and evaluating our responsibilities towards the care of young people and vulnerable adults as laid down in this parish policy and guidelines, taking on board advice published by the Diocese.

Checking that this policy is followed

The Responsible Caring Group must review adherence to this policy annually and report back to the PCC about any issues and proposed solutions.

Want to help our young people? Here's how

We're always keen to encourage people to want to join our team and work with young people as they (and you) grow in faith.

There are different levels of checks that will need to be made about you, depending on what role you're going to have and whether or not you're going to be working alone with young people.

Occasional help

There are roles for volunteers to help group Leaders in an occasional capacity and in which you will not be taking responsibility for the group and which should not require you to be left alone with any young person. For these roles, you need only offer your help to the Leader of that group.

Supervisory roles

Anyone who works as a Leader or Assistant Leader for one of our young people's groups, or who may be asked to supervise one or more young people, must have enhanced CRB clearance and PCC approval first. Additionally, we will need to check references for anyone who has a teaching role or a role caring for infants.

If you want to become a Leader or Assistant Leader for one of our groups, you should have an initial meeting with the group's Leader or with the Rector or Associate Vicar. If they support your application, complete and return a copy of the CRB disclosure form (see the Parish Administrator).

If it's a **teaching role** (as a Leader or Assistant Leader with Junior Church or a Youth Group) **or a role caring for infants** (in Crèche), you must also complete and return an application form, giving the names of two people who can act as referees for you (again, see the Parish Administrator for copies of the form).

Once your enhanced CRB clearance and (where appropriate) satisfactory references have been returned, the PCC will be asked to formally **approve** your appointment to take this position of responsibility.

Paid posts

For any parish staff post, the Churchwardens designate an appointments panel to advertise, shortlist and interview candidates. Shortlisting will be based on information supplied in the application and on references. The offer of any post is subject to enhanced CRB clearance.

Health and safety first

Guidance on good health and safety practice is given on pages 10 to 12 of the diocesan [Child Protection Policy and Guidelines](#), including a comprehensive checklist for group leaders.

You should know what you'll do in an emergency – where the nearest telephone is, what the fire evacuation procedure is, how to raise a fire alarm, where the first aid kit is, where the Accident Reporting Book is.

Fire evacuation

In the event of a fire, your responsibility is to evacuate the young people first – not to tackle the fire – then to sound the alarm (see *Emergency telephone* locations below).

You should organise a practice fire evacuation for your group at least once a year.

First aid

At least one of the adult supervisors at every group meeting should have had basic first aid training within the last 3 years.

First aid kits are located in the kitchens in the Parish Centre and Monastic Workshop, in the Song School and by the kitchen near the Vestry in the Abbey, maintained by our Health & Safety Officer.

If an incident happens which requires urgent medical attention, the first aid trained leader should give first aid while the other leader calls for an ambulance and then contacts parents.

Details of all accidents or injuries should be recorded in an Accident Reporting Book (located with the first aid kits) and parents/carers informed immediately.

Emergency telephones

There are telephones in the upstairs rooms in the Parish Centre and in the Song School in the Abbey. The nearest public phonebox is in the Market Place at the top of Hallstile Bank.

Medication

You should never give any medication to young people. If requested by a parent or carer, remind a young person to take their medication themselves.

Risk assessment and accident prevention

You should check that a risk assessment has been carried out recently on any venue that your group uses – to identify any significant risks to those using that place and to respond accordingly.

During Crèche and Sunday School sessions, plug all low level electric sockets with push-in socket covers.

Ensure chairs are not stacked more than 5 high and have their backs to a wall; keep children from climbing on them; and ensure tables are only stacked where they are stable.

Ensure that cleaning materials and any poisonous substances are kept out of reach – preferably locked away.

Organising activities

Risk assessment

In preparing any activity which you are leading – choir, youth group, Junior Church, crèche, bell ringing, whatever – you should always carry out an activity risk assessment to identify any significant risks to those involved and to plan accordingly.

Guidance on carrying out risk assessments is available from the Parish Centre..

Supervision

There should always be two (approved and CRB checked) leaders for every group of young people; and, where girls are present, at least one leader must be female.

Taking this as a minimum, the staffing levels recommended by Diocesan guidelines vary according to the age of the young people. The guidelines are 1 adult for every,

- 3 aged 0 and 2
- 4 aged 2 to 3
- 6 aged 3 to 5
- 8 aged 5 to 8

For older groups, you need to judge how many adults are needed to fulfil your duty of care, given the nature of the activity, where it's happening, how well you know the group, how wide the age range is, etc.

Approval

All activities organised for young people need PCC approval before they take place.

Approval should be gained annually from the PCC for all **regular group meetings** – choir practices, Sunday meetings of crèche and Junior Church, youth group meetings, bell ringing rehearsals, etc. The PCC should be informed about your planned venues, supervision, parental consent, insurance and, if appropriate, transport. This approval should be noted on form CP6 (page 34) from [Child Protection Policy and Guidelines](#).

Note that there are usually 9 PCC meetings a year and dates are published on a noticeboard in the South Transept. Contact the PCC Secretary or Parish Office for help on getting on the PCC agenda.

Junior Church and youth group leaders should review with and get approval from the clergy for their **teaching programmes**. This could be an annual or termly exercise.

PCC approval is also needed for any **one-off event** organised for young people, be it held at the Abbey or away. See the guidance below on *Holding special events* .

You must inform **OFSTED** when any activities include under 8s and last for more than 2 hours. See the diocesan [Child Protection Policy and Guidelines](#) page 16 – Activities Which Include Under 8s.

Contacting young people

You should always be careful when contacting young people to keep your communication as public as possible – for example, direct email to groups (rather than individuals) and keep a copy electronically; avoid phone texting (which is, by its nature, essentially private).

Registration and parental consent

All Leaders should keep a **register** of attendance at each group session, recording both young people and adults present.

You should get the parents/carers of all the young people in your group to complete and sign a **consent/registration form** once a year, which provides information for you about:

- The young person's name, address and phone number
- Who to contact in case of any emergency and where to contact them
- Any special needs or relevant health conditions or dietary restrictions
- Any access restrictions (eg in the case of separated parents)
- Whether or not the young person can leave the session unescorted

These forms should be kept together with the attendance register and both should be kept securely. The information provided should be kept in confidence. Out of date forms should be destroyed.

Holding special events

For any special event you organise, be it at the Abbey or away, you will need to take account of the following as well as conducting a risk assessment and planning supervision levels (as outlined above in *Organising activities*).

Parental consent

Specific parental consent is needed for all young people attending such events. Use a form like that in Diocesan [Child Protection Policy and Guidelines](#) (form CP9, page 37).

Transport

You need to check that all drivers have held a driving licence for more than 2 years; that the cars to be used are roadworthy and have seat belts for every person carried; and that the drivers' motor insurance will cover them for carrying young people on such an activity

If you take the young people away in a minibus, consider the minibus safety checklist on page 22 of the Diocesan [Child Protection Policy and Guidelines](#).

Telephone

Someone should be carrying a mobile phone that can be used to call for help in the event of an emergency.

Adventure activities

Note that some "Adventure" activities need to be licensed – see page 14 of the Diocesan [Child Protection Policy and Guidelines](#).

Performance

Young people who are performing in shows may need to be licensed – see page 17 of the Diocesan [Child Protection Policy and Guidelines](#) for advice.

Approval

Specific PCC approval for the event will be needed before it takes place.

You will need to provide the PCC with an outline of what will happen at the event; the planned dates; approximately how many young people will be going; who will be lead and what other adults will attend; and detail about the transport arrangements (if any), including names of drivers and confirmation that their driving licence, insurance and car condition are satisfactory. This approval should be noted on form like the example form CP6 on page 34 of the Diocesan [Child Protection Policy and Guidelines](#).

Good practice during activities

The Diocesan [Child Protection Policy and Guidelines](#) pages 13 to 15 provide good practice principles for working with young people and leading groups. This includes guidance on handling unacceptable behaviour, on physical contact and on taking infants (and those with special needs who require it) to the toilet.

Page 17 of the same guidelines gives advice about working with young people from ethnic minorities.

Page 18 provides advice on the use of Information Communications Technology (ICT), in particular for using the Internet safely.

Insurance cover

The Abbey is insured by the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group who highlight a number of points about their cover on page 23 of the Diocesan [Child Protection Policy and Guidelines](#).

In summary, under this policy, authorised volunteers are regarded as employees and cover is included for:

1/ Personal accident

While you are acting on church business or authorised activities in the British Isles, providing for:

- Payments in the event of your injury or death, according to a schedule of benefits based on the severity of the injury.
- Limited payment for any associated medical/dental/surgical expenses.
- Payment for lost deposits for travel/accommodation on tours organised by the Abbey due to illness.

2/ Employers liability

This protects the Abbey against claims for liability in the event of your injury, while you are acting on church business or authorised activities anywhere in the world.

3/ Public liability

Protecting the Abbey and you against similar claims for liability, while you are acting on church business or authorised activities anywhere in the world, if:

- Someone else is injured as a result of an activity you are doing
- Someone else's property is damaged (except cars, aircraft or watercraft)
- Someone else's rights are infringed (eg through trespass or nuisance).

Note about motor insurance cover

The Abbey's insurance policy includes some back-up cover for motor accidents while you're driving as an approved (by the PCC) driver on church business or authorised activity in the British Isles.

However, this cover is very limited and the insurers recommend that you check that your own motor insurance covers you for such activities.

If you have concerns about a young person's welfare

There is considerable guidance in Diocesan [Child Protection Policy and Guidelines](#) pages 46 to 54 about what to do if someone approaches you with concerns (or if you have any concerns yourself) that a young person's welfare is in danger. This includes definitions of abuse; guidance on what to do if someone tells you about possible child abuse; confidentiality; spiritual abuse; domestic violence; and the Diocesan Child Protection Management Group.

If you have any concerns, you should tell one of the Abbey's Responsible Caring Group in confidence – or the Rector or Associate Vicar – or the Diocese's Child Protection Officer.

We will then ensure that the detailed Diocesan child protection guidance is followed and that – if considered appropriate – the police or social services and the Diocesan Child Protection Officer are told immediately.

It is vital that you don't ignore your suspicions about this. Don't do nothing.