

Frequently Asked Questions for Leaders

The following document aims to help answer the most common queries by leaders. These apply only to church-based organisations where the church leadership has a direct input into the spiritual wellbeing of the group. Should you have any other questions please speak to a member of the safeguarding panel.

What if a family is visiting the church for 1 day, or with a friend whose parents belong to our church - should a consent form be completed for each child attending our youth & children's programmes?

It is important that the church has a record of each child's attendance at our programmes. However we understand that it may not be possible to complete absolutely every piece of information on the consent form. We would ask that the adult who is responsible for the child completes at least the following information i.e. Name, address, date of birth, name and contact details of responsible adult.

Should a child attend a programme where no parent/responsible adult is available, the leader in charge should gather whatever information is available from the child i.e. name, address, date of birth, parent/guardian's contact details. The leader should attempt to make contact with the parent / guardian to ascertain if they are happy for the child to attend.

In either of these scenarios a leader should never turn a child away, especially if that will put the child at further risk.

What should a leader do if a child arrives at one of our programmes with no parent/guardian or no consent?

Firstly, it is really important not to send the child away. By doing so you could be placing the child at further risk. If it is practically possible, ask for another leader to be present, and try to gain as much information as possible concerning the child's parents/guardian and the reason why the child has come on their own. If you think there is any immediate risk to the child, then contact the Safeguarding panel as soon as possible. If there is no deemed risk, then contact the parent/guardian to advise them where the child is, and ask them if they have permitted the child to attend the programme. If permission was given, then

complete as much information as possible. If permission was not given, ask for the parent / guardian to come and collect the child immediately. Do not leave the child on their own at any time during this period. Following the resolution of this issue, should you then have any concerns about the child's wellbeing, complete an incident form and refer this to the safeguarding panel.

How can I access consent forms?

For Boys Brigade, all consent forms will be held by the Captain or Section Leaders. All consent forms for other church groups will be held in the ChurchSuite Church Management System. One leader from each organisation will be granted access by the Parish Administrator to the system upon request.

When should an activity risk assessment be carried out by a leader?

Activity Risk Assessments should only be carried out where children are staying overnight at a venue. If a group goes to an activity and returns home on the same day e.g. bowling, crazy golf etc, a risk assessment in most cases will not be required. However if the leader deems there to be a heightened risk (leaders transporting children, events with lots of other people etc), it would make sense to complete a risk assessment.

In all cases, an activity consent form should be completed by parents for the event. These can be set up electronically on Churchsuite through the Parish Office with enough notice.

How long do I need to retain our records for?

The Church of Ireland provides clear guidance on how long records for youth & children's programmes should be retained for. The details of this can be found at <https://safeguarding.ireland.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/ROI-Child-General-Data-Protection-Regulations-and-Safeguarding-RI.pdf> . All such information will be held securely by the Parish Safeguarding team, and therefore at the end of each church year (June), appropriate records should be passed to them. It is the responsibility of the group leader to pass these to the Safeguarding panel, and not for the safeguarding panel to chase these.

Those retention periods that are most relevant to youth & children's leaders are provided below

Type of Record	Responsibility	Details of records	Retention period
Child Protection Records	The Select Vestry (through the Panel) is responsible for managing; protecting; limiting access; updating and reporting; adhering to all data principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse Any records relating to disclosures, concerns or allegations including reports from bishops/clergy/staff/volunteers, reports and correspondence to/from Tusla, reports to An Garda Síochána Any records of advice given to bishops/clergy/staff/volunteers and notifications to parents in relation to a concern, disclosure or allegation Any complaints about the safety and welfare of children while at children's ministry activities Any protective measures or action taken in relation to an allegation against a staff/volunteer Any actions taken in response to a complaint against staff/volunteer 	Keep indefinitely and archive
Information on children and young people	The Select Vestry (through the Parish Panel) is responsible for ensuring compliance with the managing; protecting; limiting access; updating and reporting; adhering to all data principles	• Membership / Registration forms	Archive until 7 years after the child turns 18 years then: Keep a reduced register of members (see sample below) including name, address and date of birth and dates of membership to be archived indefinitely; and delete all other material
		• Accident reporting sheet of books of children	The date when a child become an adult plus 20 years then destroy
		• Attendance records	Archive indefinitely
		• Other parental consent forms	Archive until 7 years after the child turns 18 years, then destroy