



Group Management

Guidance

Group Management Good Practice

It is good practice for youth workers to:

- Understand the purpose, aims and objectives of the programme and have a clear understanding of the proposed activity
- Conduct a briefing to ensure that workers (including third party providers where relevant) and young people have clear understanding of the code of conduct and expected standards of behaviour
- Be briefed and aware of any significant risks and control measures that a risk assessment has identified
- Be aware of any current guidance regarding epidemics (e.g. Covid-19) and how any related control measures may affect programme delivery
- Have access to a list/register of all group members with necessary information pertinent to the welfare and health & safety of all young people, in adherence to data security measures
- Ensure levels of supervision are in place appropriate to the individual needs, activity and location
- Use roll-calls / headcounts if necessary to check the full group is present, particularly at higher risk points such as getting on or off transport, crowded public places or if close to significant hazards such as cliffs or water
- When travelling, ensure that everyone knows the meeting point and what to do if they become separated from the group
- Be aware of and understand incident and emergency plans, including how to access first aid provision and be able to contact other workers if help is required
- Where possible, to have prior knowledge of the venue, and/or access to pertinent information such as emergency procedures, first aid points and how to contact venue staff
- Have an understanding of and the competence to undertake dynamic risk assessments and respond accordingly to any unforeseen hazards
- Monitor the activity and make any reasonable adjustments to plans in accordance with the physical and mental condition and abilities of the group or the suitability of any weather conditions

Youth organisation workers should also ensure that each young person under their care:

- Knows who their leader(s)/ workers are at any given time and how to contact them, and who else is in their group
- Understands any instructions or briefings given to them
- Understands the main risks involved in the activity, measures in place to manage them and how their own behaviour may affect these
- Is able to alert a staff member if someone is missing or in difficulties
- Has a clear understanding of any restrictions or parameters in place i.e. geographical boundaries; curfews or time limits; what they are/are not able to do with or without informing a staff member
- Is aware of any designated meeting place and any action they should take if they become lost or separated from the group
- Understands and accepts the code of conduct

Workers have a duty of care for young people and for each other during youth programmes, events and activities. In order to help manage groups effectively it is important to ensure that workers understand their roles and responsibilities, and are able to communicate effectively with young people, each other and any relevant third party staff. Where partners, such as transport, activity or accommodation providers take responsibility for elements of health and safety, youth workers should communicate with them to establish clear supervisory responsibilities throughout programme delivery.

Group management and leadership

There should be a clearly identified person responsible for the management of the event/programme who will also be responsible for maintaining the safety of all young people and workers participating in the event. This will include ensuring appropriate supervision and welfare support arrangements are in place, and that the organisation's safety policy is adhered to at all times.

Supervision of young people means maintaining a watch over them to ensure their safety and wellbeing. Supervision may be direct, indirect (within clear boundaries) or remote and workers should anticipate likely behaviour or actions of young people and take reasonable steps to prevent any leading to harm.

Welfare support, sometimes referred to as 'pastoral care' means providing what young people need beyond their immediate health and safety, and may include: inclusive provision; behavioural or emotional support; discipline; privacy & security; first aid and/or access to medication; emergency care and proactive communication with parent/guardians if necessary. For welfare considerations specific to workers please refer to the welfare section.

Where there is more than one worker involved in an activity or programme, the respective roles and responsibilities of each worker should be clearly defined and understood by both workers *and* young people. All workers will be responsible for the provision of welfare support.

This is particularly important where third parties are delivering elements of the programme. In these cases, provider staff will most likely take responsibility for the delivery of that specific activity, however youth organisation workers are likely to need to retain overall responsibility and continue to provide welfare support as required. Youth workers should avoid handing over all responsibility to external staff and should not view the activity time as 'time-off'.

Lone working

If a worker is to work alone away from the group for any significant time, youth organisations should consider what arrangements will be necessary in order to respond to anything that might occur and to safeguard the worker's health and wellbeing. Apprentices, trainees/new workers and young people should not work alone.

Downtime / freetime

Downtime or free time during youth services can provide opportunity for things to go wrong or for incidents to occur. It is important to ensure that appropriate supervision arrangements for the specific young people present are in place for the duration of the programme and until they are collected by parent/carers or formally depart.

In most cases, youth workers will maintain responsibility for the supervision of young people throughout the programme or service delivery. Where programmes are residential, this will include overnight.

When managing periods of time outside of structured activity workers should: take care with the use of the terms 'free time' and 'downtime' so that they do not suggest to either workers or young people that supervision will not be in place; ensure that all young people and workers understand the code of conduct and standards of behaviour that apply at all times, including outside of structured activities; and ensure that a clear staffing system operates so that groups/individuals continue to be appropriately supervised at all times.

Public interaction

Youth work organisations should ensure that any expected or potential interaction with the public has been considered and included as part of their risk assessment. This may be during arranged or independent travel or as part of planned and structured activity such as social action projects. When managed correctly, there may be significant benefits for young people to engage with members of the public as part of a planned activity. However, the potential risks to young people of either anti-social behaviour or more serious criminal activity should be considered.

Where relevant, risks assessments should be conducted by or contributed to by an individual(s) with specific local knowledge who is able to identify specific risks or locations that cause concern and how they may be managed effectively.

Young people should be briefed in advance of any particular risks identified and be reminded of expected standards of behaviour and any code of conduct. During direct supervision, workers should remain alert and attentive to the actions of persons in the vicinity and should position themselves appropriately in order to be able to maintain an effective overwatch of the group.

If presented with any cause for concern, workers should look to avoid confrontation wherever possible and seek to take the safest action possible and remove the group from the situation or location if possible and deemed necessary. Workers should look to defuse and de-escalate where possible and avoid the use of any language or action which may aggravate the situation. The police should be notified of any cause for criminal concern and workers should not hesitate to call the police if they deem anyone to be at immediate or latent risk.

Any incidents should be reported as per organisational policy and action taken to protect the safety and welfare of all individuals.

Amnesties

Where applicable, for example on residential programmes or where young people are unknown to workers, amnesties can be an effective means of allowing young people to voluntarily hand in any items or possessions that may be deemed to contravene a code of conduct or expected and agreed behaviours. This would include recreational drugs, weapons and alcohol. Amnesties should however be carefully managed and staff should be trained in handling this process.

Leaving early

Appropriate arrangements for when young people may need to depart a programme or cease engaging with an organisation will depend very much on the nature of the programme or youth service and the age or vulnerability of the individual.

It is good practice for organisations to consider what actions or procedures may be appropriate, and to ensure that workers and young people understand any related protocols. Considerations will include: appropriate supervision and the point at which a young person is no longer under the organisation's duty of care; handover and/or liaison with parents/guardians; transport arrangements for the young person to safely return home.