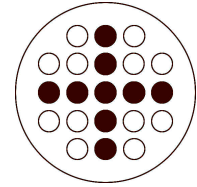




THE DIOCESE OF  
RIPON & LEEDS

# CHILDREN ARE WELCOME



DIOCESAN CHILDREN &  
YOUNG PEOPLE'S  
DEVELOPMENT TEAM

## USING THE PACK

This resource has been devised to help churches to focus on ways in which they welcome children and young people and to explore ideas for further action.

The material has already proved useful to a variety of groups:

- Clergy Teams and Parochial & District Church Councils,
- Volunteers working with children & young people,
- Specially convened church focus groups.



Each church is different and some aspects of the pack will be more pertinent than others. Whoever leads the exercise would do well to read through the whole pack and familiarize themselves with each of the points covered.

- **The Chart** – this offers an overview of key elements that go to help make children and young people welcome in the church.
- **Discussion Sheets** - each box on the Chart has accompanying notes & questions to help stimulate discussion and explore each particular aspect further.

You may quickly identify boxes that require more attention than others.

Your working group might benefit from sub-dividing and, with copies of the relevant notes, focus on just one box on the chart before reporting back to the whole group.

Cross-over between the subjects is to be expected and simply illustrates how every aspect of welcoming children and young people is inter-linked.

There may also be at least one other aspect specific to your church that is not on the chart. Provision and suggestions for this area of the discussion is made in the notes accompanying Box 12.

Nobody knows everything. Working as a group should help reveal a variety of perceptions, knowledge and experience. It is likely that further actions or research will be identified and a careful note should be made of what this is and who is responsible for undertaking it.

Discovering what your church already covers and is good at can be very encouraging and motivating, but welcoming children & young people is never a one-off undertaking.

We would encourage churches to make a point of regularly reviewing their work with children & young people, perhaps inserting it as an annual agenda item for the District or Parochial Church Council.

6/11

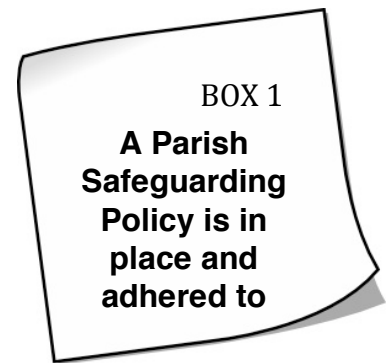
**For assistance please contact the team:** **Nic Sheppard:** [nic.sheppard@riponleeds-diocese.org.uk](mailto:nic.sheppard@riponleeds-diocese.org.uk)  
**Anne Carter:** [anne.carter@riponleeds-diocese.org.uk](mailto:anne.carter@riponleeds-diocese.org.uk)  
**Graham Richards:** [graham.richards@riponleeds-diocese.org.uk](mailto:graham.richards@riponleeds-diocese.org.uk)

**This Pack and further resources are available on the Diocesan Website:** [www.riponleeds.anglican.org](http://www.riponleeds.anglican.org)

# CHILDREN ARE WELCOME CHART



|  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| <p>1 A Parish Safeguarding Policy is in place and adhered to.</p>  | <p>2 The church has a vision and specific objectives for its work alongside children.</p>   | <p>3 The buildings and rooms are safe, accessible for all, and appropriate for use.</p> | <p>4 Suitable facilities and materials are in place for children of all ages and abilities.</p>   |
| <p>5 There are appropriate opportunities for children to meet and develop their relationship with God.</p>                                   | <p>6 Children are welcomed at church services and have a valued role.</p>   | <p>7 Children are listened to and responded to appropriately.</p>                       | <p>8 There is provision in place for children to learn about the Christian faith, the Bible and Prayer, and appropriate resources and leadership is in place.</p> |
| <p>9 Children are recognised as members of the church. They are encouraged to contribute to, and participate in, the life of the church.</p> | <p>10 Children's group leaders are nurtured, trained, resourced, encouraged, represented and accountable within the whole church. Leaders know where to go for the support they need.</p> | <p>11 Children are encouraged to be active citizens in the community and the world.</p> | <p>12</p>   |



This section of the Children Are Welcome Chart may seem daunting, but it is one of the easiest to mark as completed!

The guidelines and procedures for establishing your parish's Child Safety Policy are very clear and accessible. There is training regularly held by the Diocesan Child Protection Officer for parish representatives to attend.

No parish can develop any Children's and/or Youth Work, unless a Safeguarding policy is in place. That is why it is the first box in the chart. You must take every step to get the practice and procedures right, before you begin.

Insurance cover for your work with children and young people will depend on complying with protection policies and making the best use of guidelines.

Safeguarding procedures aren't there to be a burden or put-off. They have been developed because children and young people are worth safeguarding and to do anything less would be a disservice.

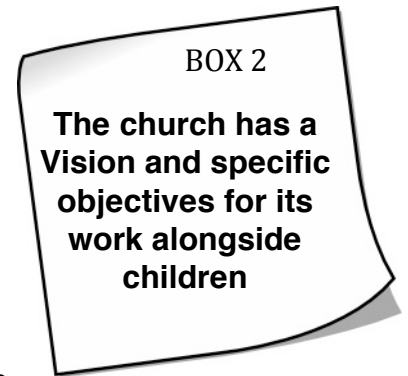
It also places a real value on your volunteers, safeguarding them as they take on the work. They too are worth it and having the right policy and procedures protects and reassures them too.

### **Checklist**

- Review your current practice and policy.
- Identify any changes or updates that need to be introduced in the light of current guidelines.
- Draft and discuss the new or updated policy.
- PCC need to agree (new or updated) policy.
- Identify a member of the PCC to monitor the work with Under 18s to ensure practice and procedures are being followed correctly and necessary CRB checks are undertaken and up to date.
- Ensure all your children's & youth workers have current enhanced CRB accreditation.
- Hold a session with the people who work as Children's & Youth Work volunteers, to explain what is required and how the procedures work.
- Make sure all your volunteers have a paper copy of the policy and procedures.
- Agree a date for a regular review of your Child Protection Policy (ideally, annually).
- Make sure the parish is represented at any training events where Child Safety issues are being explored or updated.

**Keep a check on any recent changes to guidelines.**

Up to date parish guidelines are always readily available on the Diocesan Website under the heading 'Safeguarding'.



***“Where there is no vision, the people perish”*** Proverbs 29:18

How often have you heard that quoted?

Having a vision and objectives is something that is needed and useful in all walks of life, not just the Church.

For example, companies have Business & Mission Statements. This is their vision of what they want to achieve and the objectives that will help them to get there.

The following questions may help you establish **why** you believe it is important children and young people are welcome in your church and **what** steps need to be taken to ensure this vision is achieved.

***Understanding:***

- Why do you have or want children and young people’s work in your parish?
- What is it that you are seeking to achieve with the work? (Use **SMART** Goals for this: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, **T**ime-limited)
- Does the allocated funding reflect the needs to meet the vision?

***Sharing:***

- Is this vision reflected in your church vision statement?
- Are church members aware of their part in giving support to the vision?
- Is work with younger people on your church council agenda at least once a year to ensure a shared understanding and ensure proper provision is made?

***Reviewing:***

- What objectives and targets have you set for the work each year?
- How do you measure if the work continues to be successful, or do you just let it roll along regardless?
- How will you know if the work is going astray and what needs to be done to get it back on course?

These are some of the basic questions that should be asked and revisited on a regular basis. In fact it’s not just about your parish work with children and young people as it affects all ages.

No doubt the same questions should be being asked about every aspect of your parish life and ministry on an ongoing basis, but that’s a greater task

***“Where there is no vision the parish perishes”*** may be another useful reflection!

**Finally note:** What action have you identified that should or could be taken:  
• immediately • in the short-term • and in the long term?

# CHILDREN ARE WELCOME

BOX 3

The buildings and rooms are safe, accessible for all, and appropriate for use

Creating a comfortable safe environment may be a challenge in some premises, yet small simple changes can sometimes make a big difference.

## **The following points of Health & Safety must not be overlooked.**

Consider whether the buildings and rooms used by children and young people are safe and accessible in terms of:

- Reaching the building or room they need without encountering dangers (for example: adult supervision if having to cross a road)
- Hazards - objects, potential trips, poisons, sharp objects, things that could fall over etc.
- People – do ‘safe’ adults accompany children in case they are approached by anyone unknown?
- Fire - Is there a clearly understood procedure in the case of fire?
- Emergencies - are they aware of where help can be quickly reached?

**Who has responsibility for an overview** of all of these points, especially if and when changes are made?

## **Consider what you want the children and young people to experience in the way of hospitality:**

- Make sure toilets (appropriate for age-group) are accessible/available.
- Allow for sudden changes to safety such as, wind, rain, snow.
- Can refreshments be available? Do they need to be?

## **Consider whether the spaces used are welcoming to the differing needs of the children and young people you work with or would like to attract:**

- Amount of space - appropriate to age-group?
- Temperature – winter and summer?
- Comfort - appropriate & comfortable seating for each age-group?
- Noise levels – are they distracted, or are they distracting others?
- Ambiance/atmosphere - what might their space tell them about the esteem in which the rest of the church holds them? Should we be investing more?

## **Questions to consider further:**

- Would adults like to spend any length of time in this space?
- Is what is appropriate for toddlers, the same as for teenagers or adults?
- Does the space have to be multi-functional and, if so, how might storage be better arranged and negotiated to ensure all benefit?
- What can or might be done to improve the space for all those who use it?
- Have we asked the children and young people what they think?

**Finally:** What action have you identified that should or could be taken:  
• immediately • in the short-term • and in the long term?

# CHILDREN ARE WELCOME

BOX 4  
Suitable facilities and materials are in place for children of all ages and abilities.

Where and how children & young people are welcomed and engaged can make a significant difference to the quality of the relationship with adults and how welcome they feel.

Whilst these are set out as yes, no, or not sure questions, they may need some open ended discussion to identify any action which would improve the church's welcome.

| Questions To Consider   | Yes | No | Not Sure | Action/s Required? |
|---|-----|----|----------|--------------------|
| • Is specific identifiable space set-aside for children and young people?   |     |    |          |                    |
| • Do you allocate a special 'area' for parents/carers to feel comfortable with babies and very young children?    |     |    |          |                    |
| • Do you communicate what facilities are available to parent/carers and are they consulted about improvements?    |     |    |          |                    |
| • Has thought been given to toilet facilities, food, drink and all those things that ensure our everyday comfort? |     |    |          |                    |
| • Is there furniture, carpeting, or curtains that need replacing/updating/cleaning with young children in mind?   |     |    |          |                    |
| • Is the lighting conducive to the activities?  |     |    |          |                    |
| • Are you aware of new materials which may be available for worship, teaching and activities?                     |     |    |          |                    |
| • Is there access to good quality quiet toys, books and activities to keep younger children engaged?              |     |    |          |                    |
| • Is there sufficient equipment suitable for creative and reflective activity?                                    |     |    |          |                    |
| • Do you take into account the requirements of children with learning and physical disabilities?                  |     |    |          |                    |
| • Have you key 'befriender/s' for parents/carers and their children whilst they are in church?                    |     |    |          |                    |
| • <i>Further Questions This List Provokes?</i>  |     |    |          |                    |

**Finally note:** What action have you identified that should or could be taken:  
 • immediately    • in the short-term    • and in the long term?

# CHILDREN ARE WELCOME



How do we help children to explore their experience of God?

How do we relate to God spiritually?

Children are born spiritual beings and are far more open and closer to God than many of us grownups! They have a deep spirituality that is real, vibrant and insightful. They can often surprise us with the way they understand the very nature of God, sometimes describing incredibly profound spiritual truths which challenge & develop our own understanding. Yet, somehow, we seem to sideline our children's spiritual development, perhaps because we don't understand it ourselves.

*Rebecca Nye, possibly one of our leading experts in childhood spirituality says in her recent book: Children's Spirituality. (p5) 2010*

*"Children's spirituality starts with God – it is not something adults have to initiate. God and children (regardless of age or intellect) have ways of being together, because this is how God created them."*

All our children are born spiritual beings, as well as physical.

Just as the Christ child opened the eyes of old and learned sages to the spiritual truths about God, so too can our children today. The sad thing is, we so often neglect them, ignore them and miss these God-given moments.

These may be useful questions to consider as a church:

- What opportunities are there in your worship and parish activities for children and young people to experience & develop spirituality?
- How do you show your children and young people (and enable them to experience) God in your local community and environment?
- How are your volunteer leaders being encouraged and given space to explore their own spirituality and relationship with God?
- When was the last time you asked or made opportunity for children or young people to express a spiritual truth about God?

**Finally note:** What action have you identified that should or could be taken:  
• immediately • in the short-term • and in the long term?

# CHILDREN ARE WELCOME

BOX 6

Children are welcomed at church services and have a valued role

This section is largely about your Church Services but discussion might broaden to church events as a whole.

Are children or young people welcomed at all services and church events?

Some services and events may not be considered appropriate for children. However, children & young people do have the ability to attend at the most unexpected times or more often, not turning up at the expected times.

How we respond as a church when children and young people are present, can make a big difference to their lasting perception of church, and whether they are *really* welcome to be a part of it.

Here are some questions that may challenge and broaden your thinking:

- Where does Church happen for children and young people?
- When are children and young people usually in church services?
- How do we let them know that they are welcome?
- Are there particular roles for them within services?
- Are they treated as accepted and valued members of the congregation?
- Do we appropriately acknowledge that children are with us?
- How might children and young people welcome us and others?

Consider how we value the children and young people amongst us.

In Services:

- What part do children and young people take, and do we credit children and young people with ability/faith/integrity:
  - In the tasks/ roles/responsibilities?
  - In the liturgies we use?
  - In the way we talk to them?
  - In the way we listen to them?
  - In the way we behave towards them?
  - In our expectations of them?
- Can we do things differently to further acknowledge their value?

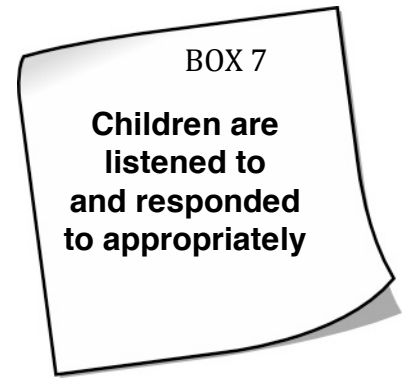
**The BIG Question:**

- Does our mutual love and respect for and with children and young people properly and effectively reflect God's love?

**Finally note:** What action have you identified that should or could be taken:  
• immediately • in the short-term • and in the long term?



# CHILDREN ARE WELCOME



*“Don't assume you know what's best for us without our opinions. You don't. Maybe you know what would be best for you if you were a child, but you're not in our minds now, are you?”*

**16 year old girl**

It is a challenge to recognise and enable the capacity of children and young people to be the agents of change both for themselves and for others.

To do that, the whole Church needs to listen to what children and young people are saying and respond to what it hears. That isn't easy - and won't necessarily be comfortable, because the clarity with which children understand and speak about their lives sometimes challenges our preconceived notions of what we expect to hear.

Yet, children and young people respond very positively to adults who show that they are willing, and will make time, to listen. You may be able to recall adults from your own childhood who made time and space to share and understand your concerns. They can remain important and special people to us, and often helped shape who we are now as adults.

Active listening can be very hard work but also very rewarding as it can enable the speaker to understand their own thinking and the listener to build their understanding.

An important part of welcome, both for adults and for young people, is being heard and being taken seriously.

Here are some questions that may be helpful to consider:

- How do adults in the church learn and grow through listening to children and young people?
- Are there further ways in which we could encourage children and young people in our church to express their thoughts and feelings?
- What opportunities are there for leaders/parents/children to offer comments or recommendations when the church makes plans for the future?
- How does the Church Council hear the views & opinions of children and young people?
- Does the Church Council follow up/consider any comments / recommendations made by children and young people?

**Finally note :** What action have you identified that should or could be taken:  
• immediately • in the short-term • and in the long term?

# CHILDREN ARE WELCOME

## BOX 8

**There is provision in place for children to learn about the Christian faith, the Bible and Prayer, and appropriate resources and leadership is in place.**

The challenge here is just as much for us as adult members of God's Church, as it is to the young people.

Oft repeated Bible stories can simply become the same as nursery rhymes and other children's stories, passed by as the child grows and matures, until they are treated as just 'nice stories for children'.

Simply *telling* Bible stories isn't enough. It can be an easy opt-out. Much more challenging, but also more rewarding and satisfying, is getting to grips with the dynamic story of God's involvement in our history – or maybe that should be "*His-Story*"?

Creative approaches to exploring the Bible require more preparation, but will lead to a much deeper understanding and ownership of what is discovered.

This involves cost. Financial costs for good quality creative resources, and costs in time & money for proper training for your parish volunteers, as well as preparation and personal study by them for their work with the young people.

Access to meaningful prayer for children and young people requires creative thinking and careful preparation. How can we make this something that they can engage in? This is probably not done by someone just reading out prayers, but rather, requires active engagement in creating prayer. This can take many forms: writing, acting, drawing, painting and making. Prayer can involve the use of photographs and video, pilgrimage, music, the senses, speaking and being silent.

Parish volunteers need to receive inspiration and training. They may need active encouragement and financial support to attend training. Anything less devalues not just them and their skills and commitment, but also the children & young people too.

Four questions that may help and challenge your approach to the Bible and Prayer:

- How is the Bible used and explored in your church?
- In what form does prayer with children and young people take in your church?
- What training and resources are offered and used by volunteers working with children and young people in your church?
- Does your church budget sufficiently for resources and training?

**Finally note:** What action have you identified that should or could be taken:  
• immediately • in the short-term • and in the long term?

# CHILDREN ARE WELCOME

BOX 9

Children are recognized as members of the church. They are encouraged to contribute to, and participate in, the life of the church.

## **Part 1 - Children are recognised as members of the church.**

- How does the church recognise church membership?
- Do the children and young people feel that they belong to the Church?
- In what ways can we help children & young people sense 'belonging'?
- What can we do to value/ recognise church membership, for all ages?
- Do we value children & young people as full members of the church or simply members in waiting?
- How recently have you reviewed your policy regarding Communion, Baptism and Confirmation and does it sufficiently provide for all ages?

## **Part 2 - Children are encouraged to contribute to, and participate in, the life of the church.**

- How much do adults participate in Church life?
- How much do children participate in Church life?
- What contribution do children and young people make in our church?
- Are there further contributions children and young people would like to make?
- How do people of all ages benefit from each other's company?
- Is church a place where children and young people's gifts and talents are encouraged and nurtured?
- What particular part(s) do children & young people play in the whole life of the church?

### **The BIG Question:**

- Is your church a place where children and young people are encouraged and enabled to develop their relationships with God and the whole Church?

**Finally note:** What action have you identified that should or could be taken:  
• immediately • in the short-term • and in the long term?

# CHILDREN ARE WELCOME

BOX 10

**Children's group leaders are nurtured, trained, resourced, encouraged, represented and accountable within the whole church. Leaders know where to go for the support they need**

Part of welcoming children and young people is ensuring they are well resourced. The most important resource the church has in terms of work with children and young people, are the people who give of themselves in leading and helping with groups.

The leaders and helpers have valuable insight which can help inform and equip the whole church in developing ministry and service.

To answer many of these questions you will need to discuss and ask those who lead and guide the children and young people.

#### Resources:

- Do our leaders & helpers feel sufficiently: Nurtured? Encouraged?
- Have our leaders been given sufficient: Training? Resources?

#### Representation:

- Do the leaders have a specific representative in the overall leadership of the church?
- Do they all know who that is?
- Do they feel confident to speak to that representative about anything related to the children and young people's ministry and work?
- Do they know that they will be listened to and respected in their discussions?
- Do they know that discussions will be followed up?
- Do they know that their opinions are valued?

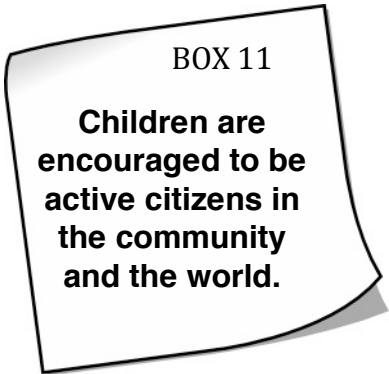
#### Accountability & Support:

- Do the leaders have agreed 'job descriptions' that they are comfortable with to help clarify the extent of their responsibilities.
- Do the leaders know that they will be monitored in a supportive way, so that if help is needed it will be available?
- Does the whole church know what the children's leaders do?
- How do we communicate what is happening in the children's & youth work?
- Are there 'praying friends' available to support the leaders?
- Does the whole church have opportunity to thank, acknowledge and value the work of the leaders and helpers?

#### The **BIG** Question:

Does the church love and value the children and young people's leaders it appoints to God's ministry and work?

**Finally note:** What action have you identified that should or could be taken:  
• immediately • in the short-term • and in the long term?



Christianity teaches that we are not created simply to exist, but to be stewards of creation and active in living out, proclaiming and establishing the Kingdom of God here on earth.

This calling places on us challenges and responsibilities, not only to care for the earth and to use its resources wisely, but to hold to and live out the Kingdom values of justice, peace and mercy.

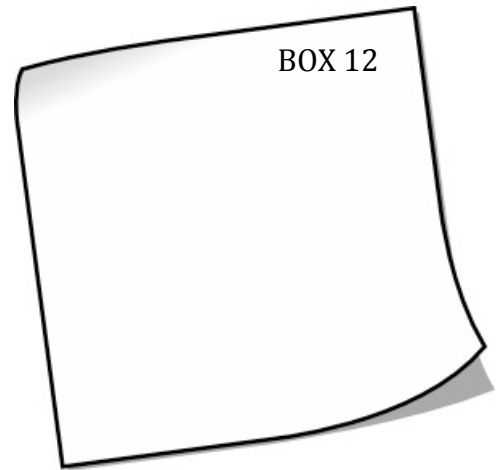
Often it is the voices of children and young people which speak out most loudly against injustice and the destruction of our planet. We need to hear their voices and welcome the wisdom they impart. The Church needs to learn from children and young people, whose language and values are formed by a deep love for and desire to protect our world and the whole of creation.

This raises issues for the church that include:

- Our own willingness to change in order to safeguard creation for future generations, putting call and belief into action.
- The importance of self-sacrifice for the greater good on a range of issues.
- Stewardship of the earth locally and globally.
- Willingness to take seriously the concerns of this generation for their future on this planet.
- Committing as communities to implement change within society.
- Challenging us to live simply in the face of peer and media pressure.

| Some Questions To Consider...   | Yes | No | Not Sure | Action Required? |
|---|-----|----|----------|------------------|
| • Do we support children and young people in taking stands which reflect their faith and beliefs rather than conforming to conflicting peer pressure? |     |    |          |                  |
| • Do we enable children and young people to instigate and participate in identifying and challenging injustice?                                       |     |    |          |                  |
| • Do we engage with mission agencies and charities in their campaigns relating to children and young people?  |     |    |          |                  |
| • Do we speak out on behalf of children and young people who have no voice?   |     |    |          |                  |

**Finally note:** What action have you identified that should or could be taken:  
 • immediately    • in the short-term    • and in the long term?



**This box isn't empty because we'd run out of ideas about welcoming children and young people.**

This is an opportunity to identify and attend to any aspects or concerns that may be particular to your church, that you feel aren't covered elsewhere.

These questions may help you identify any gaps...

- Are there any specific barriers to children and young people feeling welcomed and particularly being a part of your church?
- Do we notice when children & young people drift away from the church and is there action we need to take in response?
- Could we be making more of our contact with children & young people who are not yet a part of our church?
- How, where, when and by whom are children & young people invited to share your church welcome?
- Are there people missing that we need to invite and involve in our discussions and planning?
- As a church, how do you acknowledge, celebrate and pray for all that is achieved, however small, with children and young people?
- What have we always done in relation to children and young people's ministry that may now need to end or be re-formed or remodeled?  
Do we need to consider a *new* way of doing things:  
...new day of the week?  
...new venue?  
...new leaders?  
...new format?
- How could we share with other churches things that work for us in our ministry with and among children and young people?

**Finally note:** What action have you identified that should or could be taken:  
• immediately • in the short-term • and in the long term?

