

Church Guidance Note

Young people



Young people are an important part of any church community. Many are practising Christians, some are part of a choir, the bell-ringing team, a Sunday school or share close links through their school or a community group such as Scouts or Guides.

Many churches support and develop young people by running regular youth groups or are part of a network with other local churches working together as part of a 'Youth Ministry'. Some churches also organise exchanges and visits, both nationally and further afield, or involve young people in mentoring or working with children and their peers. Very occasionally, some churches may take on young people as apprentices, for work experience, or as employees.

Whatever the extent to which young people are involved in your church, you will need to take steps to make sure that they remain safe. In most cases, you will already have the necessary health and safety precautions in place, so this should be straightforward.

Legal requirements

A **young person** is defined as anyone under 18, and a child is anyone who has not yet reached the official minimum school leaving age (MSLA). Students reach the MSLA in the school year in which they turn 16.

Under health and safety law, every employer must ensure that all their employees, irrespective of age, are protected from danger. With this in mind, additional consideration will be needed where young persons are employed whether for work, work experience, or as an apprentice.

Risk Advice Line

Should you have any additional questions on this topic or other risk-related matters, as a valued Ecclesiastical customer you can contact us through our Risk Advice Line on

0345 600 7531

(Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm, excluding bank holidays)

and one of our in-house risk professionals will be able to assist.

Alternatively, you can email us at

risk.advice@ecclesiastical.com

and one of our experts will call you back within 24 hours.

You will have duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations (e.g. the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations). Broadly, you have a responsibility to ensure that young people employed or working with you are not exposed to risk due to their:

- Lack of experience
- Being unaware of existing or potential risks
- Lack of maturity.

Beyond this, if someone is injured, you may need to show that you have met your duty of care. For example, if your church youth group is carrying out an activity you have organised, you may need to make sure that it is done safely.

Working hours are not governed by health and safety law. Young people and children have different employment rights from adult workers and are subject to protection in relation to the hours they can work. More information can be found at www.gov.uk.

Children below the MSLA must not be employed in industrial workplaces except when on work experience. Children under 13 are generally prohibited from any form of employment.

Safeguarding matters are not covered by health and safety law, and you will need to refer to other resources for information and guidance on these matters.

Hazards to look out for

Typical hazards include the following:

- The layout of the church which might pose a specific danger to young people (e.g. towers, balconies)
- Hazardous substances used on the church premises during maintenance or cleaning
- Work equipment requiring specific instruction or training
- Tasks that require particular knowledge or skills to be done safely (e.g. lifting or moving tables or chairs).*

Remember that hazards that are obvious to you may not be obvious to a young person.

Precautions you can take

Typical precautions include:

- Appointing a person(s) to supervise young workers and monitor their progress
- Considering the need for tailored training or closer supervision for some
- Considering if the work required of a young person is beyond their physical or psychological capacity
- Taking appropriate precautions when exposed to hazardous substances or noise etc.*

*This list is not exhaustive.



Making a start

Action

1. **Identify where any young people work or are involved in volunteering activities at your church.**

This should include any future planned activities which may involve them.

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Young people could be employed by you, working on a voluntary basis or as part of a work experience placement. It may be helpful to make a list of these.

In some cases, it may be necessary to discuss what the young person will be doing in advance with the organisers (e.g. a school). It may also be appropriate to take account of what they and the parents or carers tell you of the young person's physical and psychological capacity and of any other particular needs (e.g. due to any health conditions or learning difficulties).

2. **Check the precautions you have taken are adequate.**

If they are not, identify any additional ones that are needed and who will be responsible for implementing them.

If you are an employer and have completed formal risk assessments, a simple review of these should help you identify if adequate precautions are in place to protect young persons. If not, you may need to take additional steps to protect them.

In most instances, the church environment is low risk, with everyday risks that will mostly be familiar to any young person. Your existing arrangements and precautions used to protect other employees and volunteers should be enough.

If you are taking on a work experience student for the first time, or one with particular needs, review your risk assessment before they start. This will help you decide if the precautions you already have in place will be adequate.

3. **Ensure that young people know how to work safely.**

Make a note of any information or training that is provided to individuals.

Some young people working at your church may be facing unfamiliar risks, from the job they are doing and from their surroundings. You may need to provide them with adequate instruction, training and supervision to enable them to work without putting themselves and other people at risk.

Again, where you are an employer and have completed formal risk assessments, these should help you decide what is necessary. For example, information and training may need to cover:

- The specific risks in your church
- The risks from any work to be done
- The health and safety precautions to be taken
- Emergency procedures.

It is important that you check young people have understood the instruction and training they have received.

In some cases, it might be appropriate to provide supervision for young persons. You may also need to monitor their progress, which will help you identify where additional adjustments may be needed.

Making a start

Action

4. Document your arrangements and responsibilities for ensuring the safety of young persons.

Review these where necessary, particularly if you suspect that they are no longer valid.

Retain records of the notes you have made in the steps outlined above.

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If you have prepared a health and safety policy, record these as part of it.

You can use our Church Health and Safety Policy template if haven't done this and need one to comply with health and safety law.



Want to know more?

Other useful health and safety information is available at

https://ecclesiastical.com/risk-management/articles/?q=&facet_productService=&facet_articleType=35515

Further guidance and resources are also available at:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/young-workers/index.htm>

Note: if you are in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Jersey, Guernsey or the Isle of Man, then regional variations might apply. In this instance, you should check the guidance provided by the Enforcing Agency for your region. This will be freely available on their website.

Need to report an incident involving an injury?

If an incident occurs that may result in a claim for injury, please retain any accident investigation records, e.g. accident book entry, photos etc. and contact our specialist claims team on **0345 603 8381** (Monday to Friday 8am – 6pm) for advice. Where you have received correspondence about a claim being made against you, it is important that you notify us immediately and email a copy to our experts on casualtyclaims@ecclesiastical.com.

Policy cover queries

For queries about your policy cover, call our specialist church team on **0345 777 3322** (Monday to Friday 8am – 6pm, excluding bank holidays) or email us at churchteam@ecclesiastical.com.

Alternatively, please visit churchteam@ecclesiastical.com.

This guidance is provided for information purposes and is general and educational in nature. It should not be used as a substitute for taking professional advice on specific issues and should not be taken as providing legal advice on any of the topics addressed.



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