

# Starting a Youth Group

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Outlined here are several broad areas that need to be addressed:

- Leaders
- Communication
- Premises
- Safety
- Finance
- Activities
- Community

*When starting a youth group, attention should be given to a number of issues in order to ensure that the youth work is both professional and safe, has adequate support and is attractive to young people.*



## LEADERS

### **a. Recruitment**

As effective youth work centres around the building of responsible and meaningful relationships with young people, committed leaders who are prepared to invest time in the work is crucial. There are no age limits to those that can be involved, look for those who care about the needs and understand young people.

There should be a minimum of two leaders involved in the work with the recommended ratio of leaders to young people 1:8. Where the group is of mixed sex, there should then be at least one male and one female leader present.

If you are unsure about any issue concerning child protection, you should then contact the Diocesan Child Protection Officer - Tony Selwood through the Diocesan Office.

### **b. Volunteers**

The Church should be committed to the well-being of its staff and volunteers providing, where possible, basic first-aid training and ongoing team support.

### **c. Aims and objectives**

It is a good idea to spend time reflecting on why you want to work with young people and what you want to achieve. This will ensure that all are working to a similar agenda.

### **d. Training**

It is useful for leaders to receive initial training on working with young people.

*(Discuss this with Youth Workers in the Diocese; details are given under Contact Information.)*

This will not only give leaders added confidence, but will also benefit the young people with whom you are aiming to work.

**e. Planning**

It is a good idea for leaders to get together at regular intervals to plan and pray. This will ensure that the work is well organised and will help with team-building. These times will be helpful in encouraging one another and sharing the good things that are happening.

It will be useful if leaders are aware of each other's gifts and what they feel confident, and not confident, in doing.

**f. Recognition**

When starting to work with young people, it will be important to inform the rest of the church of what will be happening. This could be done in the context of a service or at a specially organised meeting.

Many churches have found it helpful to commission their leaders during the service.

If possible, gather a group to pray regularly for the work and the young people.




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## COMMUNICATION

**a. Church**

In addition to informing the church of the youth work being set up, ensure that regular reports are given to the PCC about what is happening in the group.

**b. Young people**

Ensure that young people are aware of this group and when it will be meeting. If possible, design some attractive literature to give out. For added effect, ask a young person to design it for you.

It will be important to obtain the contact details of the young people that come along to your group so that you can communicate with them regularly.

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## PREMISES

Aim to find comfortable premises that are flexible, comfortable and warm. It will be useful if the space can be designed solely for the purposes of youth work so that the young people can have a sense of ownership and can put their own mark on it.

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## SAFETY

**a. Child protection**

A policy will need to be set up before starting the youth group. (*Refer to the Diocesan Child Protection Policy.*) If the chaplaincy does not have a Child Protection co-ordinator, one will need to be appointed.

All volunteers should sign a leaders/helpers covenant as appropriate, this will outline what is expected of them, request any medical details that are necessary to protect them, e.g. they suffer from diabetes (all details should be treated in confidence and in no way preclude a volunteer from holding a position)

All clergy and volunteers should be required to provide the names of two referees who must have known them for not less than two years, one of them in a professional capacity, and able to comment on their suitability for work with young people.

All volunteers should be provided with a copy of the church's discipline policy and Guidelines for Good Safe practice in Youth and Children's work.

**b. Risk assessment**

A risk assessment should be undertaken on the premises that are to be used for work with young people.



## SAFETY (CONTINUED)

**c. Insurance**

Ensure that the church's Insurance covers the work with young people.

**d. First-aid**

A first-aid kit will need to be held on the premises and it will be good practice for at least two leaders to receive first-aid training.

**e. Fire**

Ensure that there are adequate fire exits in the premises to be used and an appropriate number of fire extinguishers. If you have any soft furnishings in the building, it will be worth contacting a fire safety officer for advice.

## FINANCE

Agree a budget for the youth work with the PCC that will enable the aims of the group to be met. You may incur specific start-up costs that will need to be budgeted.

## ACTIVITIES

Have a brainstorming session exploring the type of activities that will engage the young people with whom you are working.

Consult with the young people about the activities that they would like to do. Perhaps it would be a good idea to encourage some of them to construct a diary of events. The more ownership they have of the group, the more effective it will be.

Ensure that you have plenty of resources that will help you achieve the aims of the group. *(Refer to the Resource list below or consult the Youth Resources section elsewhere on this site.)*

## COMMUNITY

One of the key aims of the group should be to build healthy and meaningful relationships with young people. Invest time at the beginning – getting to know them, by listening, and finding out what interests them.

Encourage group involvement in decision making wherever possible. Encourage young people's creativity and value their ideas.

Make fun activities a priority. These will help young people relax and will aid relationship building.

Consider taking the group on an activity away from the church, such as a youth camp.

*“Invest time at the beginning – getting to know them, by listening, and finding out what interests them.”*

**Resources**

Ashton M,  
**Christian Youth Work,**  
Kingsway  
ISBN 0 86065-28 1

Board of Education &  
Board of Mission ,.  
**The National Youth  
Strategy,**  
Church of England  
General Synod  
ISBN 1000003469

Clarke S. & Relph P  
**Making a Team Work**  
Kingsway  
ISBN 0 85476-53 4

Young K.  
**The Art of Youth Work,**  
Russell House  
ISBN 1 898924-49-X