

# Guidance for Camps and Residentials



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Attending a holiday camp or going on a residential stay is often one of the most memorable occasions in the lives of children and young people. For many it is a chance to go away with friends and form new relationships. When churches or Christian organisations run such an event, it offers a chance for the Christian journey to begin and be strengthened by spending time in a relaxed and supportive environment.

However, these events hold a whole range of specific safeguarding challenges, and issues that must be carefully thought through. As with all activity that happens away from your main site special care must be taken to ensure you have sufficient resource and preparation in place.

## Planning

Government guidance from 2018 requires faith communities to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are in place. When doing something different from the norm, such as going away with a group, it is important to remember that the arrangements need to be fit for this purpose also.

Last year our Helpline received several calls before residential activities took place regarding the challenges that had emerged when gathering information. Some examples are: how to deal with a child who regularly wets the bed, how to deal with a child or young person who has additional needs, how to deal with a child or young person who identifies with the opposite gender.

**Although these three examples are very different, a common approach would be suggested for all:**

- Talk to the parents about how this is dealt with at home
- Agree a plan and put it in writing to the parents which will be shared with the key leaders
- See the child/young person as a person who is entitled to love and care rather than a 'problem'
- Ensure nothing is done to exclude the child or young person without giving full consideration to how they can be enabled to attend in the first instance. If you decide that it will be too difficult, explain to the child/young person and their parents the specific reasons why
- Always place a child/young person in an age group related to their chronological age rather than developmental age

In addition and depending on the nature of the activity you will want to ensure that the following have been considered:

- Relevant and up to date criminal record checks
- What action to take if a safeguarding issue is seen or heard by any of the adults (not just the leaders)
- Transport arrangements including insurance, MOT and roadworthiness. Consideration of whether you are going to ask drivers to sign a document to say they are fit to drive (not to have drunk alcohol within the last 12 hours or taken any illegal substance)
- Consent forms from all those with parental responsibility and if children are fostered or 'looked after' that the relevant permissions are given
- Communicating to children and leaders who they should speak to if they have any concerns (posters/information etc)
- Health information
- Behavioural issues
- Additional needs
- Contacting your insurance company about the activities on the camp
- A risk assessment about all aspects of the arrangements (responsibility for this can be shared across different people)
- Knowing the contact numbers and locations of health facilities



- Knowing the contact details for the parents, the local authority where they reside, the local police public protection unit and the thirtyone:eight helpline
- Sleeping arrangements and notifying parents if there are any mixed groups of under 18's and over 18's
- Mobile phones and access to social media and wi-fi
- Cameras and the taking of photos
- Safeguarding policy reviewed

We provide a 24-Hour Helpline which is open to everyone. Last year, during the holiday period there was an upturn in calls by three times our usual demand, due to camps and residential.

**The most common topics discussed were:**

- Adults who may pose a risk
- Domestic abuse
- Drug misuse
- Eating disorders
- Gender identity
- Harmful sexual behaviour
- Mental health
- Online abuse
- Over 18's attendance at the camp
- Parental relationship breakdown
- Physical abuse/punishment
- Self-harm
- Sexual abuse

An adult hearing/seeing this or hearing about it from a friend of the child/young person means that action **MUST** be taken, and no promises can be made that it will not be passed to the safeguarding lead at the event.

**More detailed information can be found on our website: [www.thirtyoneeight.org](http://www.thirtyoneeight.org)**

Recently we have seen an increase in the volume of calls about self-harm, and a rise in calls about threats of suicide.

Some of these situations happened or are alleged to have happened at the event. Some are concerns which are shared about matters at home.

Hearing a child or young person talk about self-harm or showing evidence of scratches and cuts can be alarming for anyone who hasn't experienced this before.



## Responding to concerns

Even after the most detailed planning, things may arise which are unexpected. The Safeguarding Co-ordinator must be informed as soon as possible so that the appropriate actions can be taken. All workers should know how to contact the safeguard lead prior to the event.

Whatever the concern, if you are advised that Children's Services need to be contacted, initial contact should be made to the authority in the area of the camp/residential. However, you will also need information about the relevant authority in the home area where the child normally resides. In these situations, it is advisable to contact the authorities BEFORE alerting or speaking with parents. Our helpline will also be able to advise on specific situations.

### Things to remember:

- Keep calm
- Promise that the information will not be shared with all at the camp but WILL be shared with the necessary person or people – confidentiality will be respected but not secrecy
- Keep an eye on the young person and offer space to listen and talk
- Take advice from your safeguarding lead who may phone Thirtyone:eight for advice about what action to take and whether parents should be informed
- If there is a threat to life, phone for an ambulance or take the child/young person to A&E
- Record any allegations or serious concerns on a 'concerns' form

### Cameras and mobile phones

In advance of the residential/camp, thought needs to be given about whether phones are to be permitted and guidelines about taking photos. Many groups allow mobile phones for certain periods of time but they agree phones should be stored by the leaders at all other times. This enables the young people to remain in contact with home but protects the group from young people using the phone when they should be asleep and reassures about prohibiting access to the internet on iPhones.

Most attendees at the camp will want to take photos. Agreements need to be made about not taking pictures of members of the group when unclothed, not taking photos without someone's knowledge and only putting pictures on social media with consent especially for those where the identity might be an issue.

Before going on the trip it can be useful to talk to the group about privacy settings and the law about taking, storing and distributing images/photos. The leaders may want to ask parents in advance about their consent to take photos of their children if the plan is to use these in publicity or to place on a website.

### Sexual behaviour between young people

Legally the age of consent is 16 years and therefore a report to the police about two 16 year olds and above, unless there has been coercion is not advised. Your planning should include good supervision but it needs to be remembered that 16 and 17 year olds cannot and should not be prevented from a safe level of independence. Before a residential the young people can engage with the leaders to write an agreement of behaviour so that they are accountable. In a breach of such an agreement where sexual contact has taken place, although the statutory authorities may not be informed, we may advise that the parents are.

If there is an age difference or a developmental difference, the issue of sexual exploitation will be the concern and the older or more able person will need to know that this will be reported.

### Peer on peer concerns

More serious concerns arise when there is an allegation of harm or abuse caused by one child towards another. This may be verbal, physical or sexual.

In some circumstances we will advise that where the situation can be contained and supervised, that the young people can both remain on the camp/ residential but it is likely that parents will need to be informed to give permission for this. In minor situations, this may be an opportunity for learning about relationships with each other.

Where there is a serious assault or any allegation of sexual harm, we will advise according to the situation.

**Please contact the helpline as soon as possible after the incident.**

### Relationships between leaders and non leaders

Where a young leader is in a relationship with another non-leader, it would be helpful for them to agree in advance of the camp/ residential that they will not spend sole time with each other. This can cause relationship difficulties among the wider group and will detract the young leader from other responsibilities they have on the camp/residential.

## Sleeping Arrangements

We are often asked about the sleeping arrangements for older teens where some of the group are 18 and some slightly younger and where none of them have leadership responsibilities. The advice we give is that it seems unnatural to split a group who may know each other well just because a young person becomes 18. Our advice is to say that in circumstances where there will be a mix of 16-18-year olds, parents need to be informed in advance that this is the arrangement, to reassure that the 18 year olds are not acting in a leadership capacity and will therefore be subject to the same 'rules' as the rest of the group.

## Allegations or concerns about workers

If there is an allegation of harm perpetrated by a leader (a person in a position of trust), our advice is likely to be that the leader is stood down or sent home pending further enquiries. Whilst that may seem drastic or even unfair, if the good practice guidelines regarding two adults always being together with groups of under 18's has been breached, then this is serious, and the leader might be unable to verify that the allegation is unfounded. Please call us for advice in these circumstances before action is taken regarding the leader, ideally before they are made aware.

## Calling the thirtyone:eight Helpline

Our helpline is available 24 hours a day to offer advice when dealing with any issues that may arise. When calling the helpline you may be asked some or all of the questions below. Ensuring you have answers and relevant information to hand will help us give you the advice you need:

- The sequence of events which led to your call
- What is known about the family
- When the residential is due to end and who is collecting the child/young person from the camp or from the transport at home
- The age of the child/young person



# Five Essential Questions

- 1** Does your organisation have a safeguarding policy and appropriate forms?
- 2** Would everyone know what to do if there was a concern about possible abuse?
- 3** Are you recruiting workers safely including DBS checks where possible?
- 4** Are you training and supporting your leaders and children's workers?
- 5** Do those who attend activities or come to services know what you are doing to keep children and adults safe?

For expert help, easy to follow advice and guidance from the UK's only independent Christian safeguarding charity contact us and find out how membership with us could help you.

Call us **0303 003 1111**  
email us **info@thirtyoneeight.org**  
or visit **thirtyoneeight.org**  
follow us **@thirtyoneeight**

PO Box 133, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7UQ



Creating safer places. Together.