

ESSENTIAL THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Online Holiday Club

You may have decided to do your holiday club over Zoom or a similar online platform. Much of the material here can also be done online, with children provided with a pack of resources to use during each session, although some of the games may need to be adapted. It might be fun to dress up and/or decorate your background. Please make sure your volunteers have all read www.bit.ly/safeguardingappendixc.

You can do small group activities online by using breakout rooms, but remember that you must have two adults who are DBS checked in each breakout room. You might also like to watch this helpful video from Ruth White to help you think about the pros and cons of online engagement with children <https://youtu.be/NzIzkG8-H4o>.

Outdoors

You may have decided to run your holiday club outdoors. While some of this material is suitable for doing outdoors, you will need to enhance it with extra activities more appropriate for taking advantage of the outdoor space. Alternatively, you may have access to a marquee or large gazebo which you could use, or go outside for part of the session if you have the facilities for that. If you are using outside space, you will need to ensure that the area is clean and free from litter and animal faeces before and after your session and you will also need to consider how you will ensure that children do not wander off from the area.

You will need to think about safeguarding – how to ensure that no adults who are not on the team engage inappropriately with the children in your care. You will also need to consider issues such as access to toilets and availability of a first aid kit.

Registration

It is important to keep an accurate register of the children and adults who attend on each day of your holiday club. This information will need to be kept according to your church's data protection and safeguarding policies.

Parents/carers must also fill in a registration/consent form and children should not be accepted into the holiday club without it.

The registration/consent form must include name and date of the event; child's details; details of two emergency contacts; details of any additional needs; any health needs, medication or allergies; acknowledgement of liability; consent for photographs; consent for first aid and emergency treatment; details of who will be collecting the child at the end of the session. Do not include any information which you do not actually need (e.g. gender).

Ensure that your registration/consent form states where parents/carers can access your data policy and safeguarding policy. These forms must be kept securely and used sensitively. Sample registration forms are available here: <https://bit.ly/URCCYWpaperwork>.

Safeguarding

Make sure you are familiar with your church's safeguarding policy and that volunteers have received training. Everyone over the age of 18 who is taking part in your holiday club must have an enhanced DBS check for the church. Occasional visitors who do not have a DBS certificate must not be left alone with children and the leadership of the club are responsible for ensuring that a leader is with them at all times. See URC Good Practice 5 www.urc.org.uk/good-practice-policy-and-procedures.

You may find that volunteers have children at the holiday club to whom they are related or have a close bond. They should be encouraged to remember not to treat those children any differently – hugs and kisses, sitting on lap, being alone with a child, these things are fine for at home but not advisable in a church club situation where they may blur the boundaries for others.

Photographs

One or two people should be identified as designated photographers for the event and should wear a badge identifying them as such. Where possible, they should use a camera rather than a smartphone to take photographs and should only photograph those children whose parents have given permission. Photographs should not be used on any social media other than the church's or Church House official social media. See URC Good Practice 5 www.urc.org.uk/good-practice-policy-and-procedures. You are, however, encouraged to share any photographs with Church House Children's and Youth Work (with appropriate permissions) for use on the website, CYW Facebook page and in URC publications.

Mobile phones

It is good practice that no mobile phones are brought into the holiday club area unless absolutely necessary.

Risk assessments

It is essential that you do a risk assessment for the venue you are using for your holiday club and also do risk assessments for the activities you will engage in. Your church may have its own policy and template for risk assessments but you may wish to use or adapt the ones available here: <https://bit.ly/URCCYWpaperwork>.

Risk assessments are useless if just put in a file. Ensure that all your volunteers have read the risk assessment or, better still, discuss it during your pre-session briefings. Please be aware that all risk assessments should be approved by your church leadership team.

Safety

Check the premises you use are safe, hygienic and suitable for children – think about stacked chairs, flooring, toilets etc.

Children should not be allowed unaccompanied into kitchen areas.

Think about how to make your toilets a safe place without compromising privacy and dignity, so that you know when children have gone to the toilet and how long they have been gone. As far as this is possible, designate separate toilets for adults.

Have a routine for checking throughout the session that children have not gone missing from the group. Have a routine for the end of the session – perhaps tell children that they are superglued to the floor until their parent or carer comes to collect them and then get the parent/carer and child to come together to a leader to be signed out.

Although it is not compulsory to have someone on the team who is a trained first-aider, it is a very good idea. Make sure everyone on the team knows where the first aid box is and nominate someone to ensure that the box is fully stocked. Have a first aid recording sheet or book and keep clear and full records of any injury, however minor, who treated it and what was done. Ensure that the record is dated and signed and take note of anything that needs to be done to minimise the risk of that happening again. See here: <https://bit.ly/URCCYWpaperwork>.

Behaviour

Remember that the children are at a club and it should be fun for everyone. Do not impose rules that are not necessary or enforce participation if a child feels uncomfortable. One member of the team should be the key person to speak to for any issues that arise, and this should be the only team member who liaises directly with parents or carers

about behaviour. Remember that the best way of encouraging appropriate behaviour is to model it and to build positive relationships. You may want to watch the video on strategies to support behaviour that challenges, which was prepared for leaders of the Pilots organisation: https://youtu.be/9XxpVUGVT_o.

It is good to have a behaviour policy which all team members read and which is available for parents. An example can be found at <https://bit.ly/URCCYWpaperwork>.

You may also want a simple code of conduct which all participants sign (including leaders and volunteers), an example of which can be found at <https://bit.ly/URCCYWpaperwork>. It is helpful to have a short and punchy list of around five golden rules, framed positively ('we will' rather than 'we won't') and with visual cues as well as words. This can be put up in each room and referred to whenever necessary.

Inclusion

All we do in our churches and fellowship should be as inclusive as we possibly can make it. Nobody should be excluded due to their background, ethnicity, physical or learning needs, gender, language, or for any other reason. Children may come with additional needs or English as a second language, they may be refugees or have experienced trauma. Consider what adjustments may need to be made to enable all children to feel welcome and take part.

You may find it helpful to watch the video on strategies to support additional needs which was prepared for leaders of the Pilots organisation: <https://youtu.be/usZWfOfEhm8>. Contact children.youth@urc.org.uk for some practical tips on supporting transgender and non-binary children and young people.

Timetable

Ensure that everyone is familiar with the timetable for the sessions. It is a good idea to establish a routine for your sessions and

stick with it as far as possible. It is also helpful to have a large-scale visual timetable for the session up where everyone can see it, maybe with smaller versions in any other rooms you use. If you would like help with putting together a visual timetable using Widgit to create symbols, please do speak to your synod CYW specialist or Children and Youth Development Officer (CYDO).

Debrief and review

Although you will be tired after an energetic session and want to clear up and go home as quickly as possible, it is good practice and helpful to have a daily debrief of how everything went and to consider whether anything needs adapting for the next day; capturing positives and negatives for an overall evaluation of the holiday club. You might also like to include the children and families in your evaluation in some way and encourage children to share ideas for any future holiday clubs.

Feedback

The writers of this resource would greatly appreciate any feedback on how your holiday club went, which parts of this document were useful to you, whether there was anything additional that you needed. Please email children.youth@urc.org.uk. Remember, we would also love you to share with us any photographs for which you have the appropriate permissions.

