

Cumbria Christian Youth Camp: Youth Policy

(Issue 13)

Document History

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1. Introduction

As Christians we are called to respect young people (people aged between 0 to 16 years old, for the remainder of this document they will be referred to collectively as “campers”) as individuals and to further their well being in every way.

As “Cumbria Christian Youth Camp Trust” (CCYC for the rest of the document) we seek to foster relationships of the utmost integrity, truthfulness and trustworthiness. It is important, therefore, that everyone who works with young people, even in a voluntary capacity should behave responsibly and understand the need to operate within a carefully worked out framework of good policy and practice.

Before you take on your position as a Tent Leader, Assistant Tent Leader, Cook or Support Team member for CCYC dealing with campers, we would ask you to read this document carefully, ask questions if you do not understand anything. If you have any concerns these should be raised with one of the CCYC Trustees listed below (known as Senior Leaders for the rest of the document):

Ian Baxter
Neil Baxter
Cathryn MacPherson

Nick Williams
Sarah Williams
Sandy MacPherson

David Baxter
Reuben Lee

Ben Naylor
Claire Lee

Child Protection Co-ordinators

Sarah Williams and David Baxter are the child protection co-ordinators and Claire Lee is the deputy co-ordinator. They are responsible for co-ordinating any liaison within CCYC and with outside agencies. They must ensure that CCYC Trustees are kept informed about any relevant and important issues. Also, they are responsible for ensuring all Leaders are made aware of the policy, understand the policy and agree to comply with it.

2. Why do we need all this?

People who work with young people are sometimes vulnerable to false allegations. One of the reasons for working in accordance with the Guidelines initially recommended in the Home Office document, Safe from Harm 1991 is not only to minimise the incidence of abuse, but also to reduce the likelihood of false accusations.

When people work together as a team, supporting each other, understanding what is expected of them and keen to learn about how they might make the group even more effective, the campers thrive.

The aims of CCYC are:

- To provide a holiday for young people in a safe and caring environment,
- To Teach young people the truth of God's Word and challenge them with the claims of our Lord Jesus Christ,
- To encourage and nurture young Christians in their Faith,

and we pray that each aim will be recognised by each camper and they will be influenced not only by what we say but who we are.

3. Support

It is expected, where possible, for Leaders to attend the monthly prayer/planning meetings and more importantly the Leaders' Preparation Training held before each camp. All leaders must participate in a child protection briefing before attending Camp. If this is not possible information will be sent to each Leader before the camp. As a Trust and as a Leadership team we are there to support each other in both Physical and Spiritual aspects. Do not hesitate to ask for support from one of the Senior Leaders.

4. Confidential Declaration

Before a Leader takes responsibility for children they must:

- complete a Leaders application form
- provide a completed Church Elder/Leader Reference Form
- declare any criminal convictions (this is recorded on the application and reference forms)
- comply with the CCYC statement of faith
- agree to comply with the child protection policy

The application and reference forms are confidential and only the Leader completing the form and the Trustees will have access to this information. Once again the Trustees ask you to read the Application form carefully, including the Statements of Faith, Aims of Camp and Responsibilities. Ask questions if you do not understand anything and if necessary discuss the form further with one of the Trustees.

5. A Safe Environment

It is possible to be lulled into a false sense of security by thinking that church people will never be guilty of abusing young people because they are part of the Christian community. Sadly this is not so. Nevertheless, the best way of preventing abuse and also of protecting our fellow leaders from false allegations of abuse is to plan the work so that opportunities for abusive situations to arise are minimised. As a result of this, leaders and campers do not sleep in the same tents. Leaders' tents are located in close proximity to campers' tents to mitigate against any potential issues at nighttime for example, medical emergencies.

5.1 Tent Arrangements

Tents are allocated based on biological sex. This is in line with the high court ruling on 16 April 2025 that affirmed "*the terms 'man', 'woman' and 'sex' in the Equality Act 2010 refer to biological sex.*"

5.2 Adult/Camper Ratios

The recommended ratio is 1 Leader for the first 8 Campers and then 1 Leader for every 12 Campers. A Leader in this ratio is defined as the Tent Leader. These ratios are applicable at all off-site activities and during travel to activities. Campers should never be left on their own during off-site activities. In mixed sex groups there should always be a male and female leader present. Assistant Leaders, regardless of age, will not be given responsibility for taking Campers off site although they can join off-site activities that have spaces available. For trips to Keswick the ratio is 1 Leader and 1 Asst. Leader to **9 campers**.

Whilst on site under 18s can act as leaders of smaller groups where they will always have easy access to adult leaders. They must never be left in an isolated situation with campers.

5.3 Time alone with campers

Whenever someone needs to talk to a camper confidentially it should be in the sight of others or in a room where others can see inside. If you find yourself in the situation of being alone with a camper, tell a Senior Leader as soon as possible. On camp the field is a good place to meet and talk, it offers both space and visibility. Where the camper is of the other sex always ensure there is another leader of the same sex as the young person.

5.4 Mobile Phones

Camp is about building a community, making new friends, and learning to trust in others and in ourselves. These opportunities can be significantly lessened by the distractions of mobile phone use. While we recognise mobile phones can be useful, they can also cause problems, for example, repeated calls home contribute to and can exacerbate homesickness. Therefore, we strongly advise campers not to bring mobile phones to Camp.

If a camper does choose to bring a mobile phone or other electronic device, CCYC cannot accept responsibility for any loss or damage.

All campers' must abide by the following:

- Phones may not be used during mealtimes and meetings.
- At lights out (11pm) campers must hand in their phone or electronic communication device to their tent leader. There are no exceptions.
- We reserve the right to confiscate a mobile phone or electronic communication device until the end of Camp if it is being misused.
- Anyone using a device to cause distress including cyber bullying, taking inappropriate pictures, sharing or accessing inappropriate material will have their device confiscated. This will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis the individual could ultimately be sent home.

5.5 Good Practice in Managing Behaviour

All campers need to be treated with respect and dignity as is appropriate to their age. Learn their names as quickly as possible and try to make them feel welcome. Look out for those who are shy and timid and occupy those who are easily bored! Most campers will behave reasonably well if activities are stimulating and interesting. Good preparation is the key to success.

Under no circumstances should a camper be physically reprimanded, e.g. smacked, and verbal sanctions need to be given sensitively. Do not scapegoat, ridicule or reject a camper, even in fun. Seriously unruly behaviour needs to be discussed with a Senior Leader.

Always look out for a camper who is being bullied by another camper. Often this is quite subtle and needs to be taken seriously, as both the victim and the bully may have problems.

Excessive attention seeking or sexually provocative behaviour is often the sign that something is wrong at home. If you find that you are the object for such attention discuss this with a Senior Leader as soon as possible.

Applying discipline:

- Be consistent, insistent and persistent
- Lay clear, simple ground rules and procedures eg. No swearing, racism, bullying etc.
- Encourage good behaviour and be a good role model.
- Use a vocal tone that is steady, firm and calm.
- Try not to shout in anger or put down a camper.
- Never reject a camper just the bad behaviour.

For disruptive kids:

- Build relationships, if they want attention, then give them positive pre-emptive attention
- Talk with a disruptive camper away from the group (do not be alone with them), explain what they have done wrong and reason with them challenging them to change whilst encouraging their strengths.

5.6 Touch

A good principle is that touch should be related to the camper's needs not yours. It should be age appropriate. Obviously younger campers need a lot more physical contact than older ones. A young camper who hurts themselves may need comfort, likewise an older person who is seriously upset for some reason. Remember that a hug in public to comfort someone is very different from one behind closed doors. What might be considered acceptable "horse play" in the context of a family relationship is unacceptable between a camper and a leader. Fellow leaders should take responsibility for monitoring each other in this area.

5.7 Confidentiality

It is very important never to assure confidentiality to a camper before explaining the following:

- A leader can tell their husband or wife
- They may want people to pray for you anonymously
- If they've done or are going to do something illegal
- If they're going to harm either themselves or someone else
- If the appropriate authorities need to know

It is always possible to assure them of your help and support whatever they have to say. If they begin to tell you that they are being abused, or if you suspect that abuse has taken place, you will need to inform one of the child protection co-ordinators who will deal with the situation and where necessary inform the authorities, e.g. Social Services.

5.8 Health and Safety

There is a qualified First Aider on site who is available 24 hours a day. No leader should be expected to perform first aid unless qualified but all Leaders should know:

- where the nearest telephone is, both on and off site
- the procedure in the event of a fire on camp
- who the First Aider is and where they can be found
- the camp safety code

All off site activities, e.g. canoeing, climbing, are under the instruction of qualified and Nationally recognised organisations.

All minibuses used during camp are fitted with front facing seats and seat belts which should be worn at all times during the journey. Leaders should not use private cars to transport campers unless instructed to and must ensure they are properly insured to do so. Each journey should be covered by a Minibus log sheet which details the full names of those in the vehicle and their team name. This will be used during an incident to confirm who is on board.

A checking in and out procedure is in place for those leaving site for activities or going home. No one, including leaders, should leave site without checking out or seeking permission from a Senior Leader. On returning to site they should check back in. This procedure is used to know who is on site and off site and will be used in cases of emergency, e.g. fire, and therefore strict adherence to this procedure is paramount.

6. Help in Recognising Abuse

Those working in the statutory agencies of Health, Social Services, Police and Education are specially trained to identify child abuse. However, they often have to rely on people close to young people spotting signs that something is wrong.

Professional workers use the following definitions of abuse:

Neglect - The persistent failure to meet a child's physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Physical abuse – This may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

Sexual Abuse – Involved forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. May involve physical contact or non-contact such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Emotional Abuse – The persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and continuous adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless, unloved or inadequate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations imposed on the child. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may also occur alone. (This can include spiritual abuse where a person misuses a position of authority or power within the church)

Where abuse occurs, someone known and trusted by the child usually perpetrates it. The incidence of abuse by someone unknown is extremely low.

You may begin to suspect that a child is being abused for a number of reasons:

- the child may tell you outright
- you may notice bruises which cause you concern
- another child may tell you that their friend is being ill-treated
- an adult may admit to you that they have harmed a child in some way
- an allegation may be made on the child's behalf by a parent or carer
- you may notice a sudden change in a child's behaviour

7. Making a Response (see Appendix 1: Flow Chart for Action)

Forewarned is forearmed. It is useful for leaders to have thought through how they would handle a discussion initiated by a Camper about abuse. You must inform the co-ordinators of any discussions that take place. If you are unsure or your suspicions have been aroused, still seek advice from one of the co-ordinators. These guidelines are primarily directed at dealing with situations that may arise at CCYC. However, there may be occasions when you become concerned about possible abuse at home. CCYC is committed to taking seriously any report of suspected abuse, while realising that the personal cost to someone of making such a complaint may be high.

7.1 How to respond to a Camper wanting to talk about abuse

When a Camper wants to talk about abuse, it is important for the Leader to listen carefully to what the Camper says, without prompting or using leading questions. Above all else, listen, listen, listen.

- Show acceptance of what the Camper says (however unlikely the story may sound)
- Keep calm, look at the Camper directly, be honest
- Tell the Camper that you will need to let a Senior Leader know, don't promise confidentiality
- Even if a Camper has broken a rule they are not to blame for the abuse
- Be aware that the Camper may have been threatened or bribed not to tell
- Never push for information. If a Camper decides not to tell after all, then accept this and always be ready to listen. The co-ordinators must be notified of this.
- Don't say why? how? when? where? who? or I can't believe it etc
- Do say: You have done the right thing in telling, that must have been really hard, I am glad that you have told me, it's not your fault, I will help you
- Never make false promises
- Never make statements like "I'm shocked" or "don't tell anyone else"
- Reassure the Camper and let them know what you are going to do next

7.2 What to do once a Camper has talked to you about abuse

Make notes as soon as possible, writing down exactly what the Camper said and what you said in reply. Record what was happening immediately before and after also dates and times. Report your discussion immediately to the child protection co-ordinators (if the co-ordinators are suspected or involved go directly to a Senior Leader).

Do not discuss your suspicions or allegations with anyone else other than the above. Once a Camper has talked about abuse the Co-ordinators should consider whether or not it is safe for the Camper to return home. On rare occasions it might be necessary to take immediate action by contacting the Social Services or police.

7.3 What to do if abuse is suspected to have occurred

Please be aware that suspicion is grounds enough to discuss with either the Churches Child

Protection Advisory Service (ThirtyOneEight) or the Co-ordinators. Most abuse is not reported because people did not feel there was enough evidence, there rarely is evidence, so please discuss with one of the Co-ordinators at an early stage.

- Do not interview Campers or discuss with them or “follow up” yourself.
- It is important any investigation is done by appropriate authorities.
- Make notes as soon as possible, writing down exactly what happened and why you are suspicious. Record what had happened immediately before and after with dates and times.
- Do not discuss your suspicions or allegations with anyone else other than the above

7.4 What to do with Campers showing physical injury or symptoms of neglect

Please discuss concerns with the co-ordinators who will:

- Contact social services for advice in cases of deliberate injury or where there are concerns about the Camper’s safety .
- The parents should not be informed by CCYC in these circumstances.
- Where emergency medical attention is necessary it should be sought for immediately and the doctor informed of any suspicions of abuse.
- In other circumstances the parent should be talked to with the suggestion that they seek medical help for the child. The doctor can then initiate action if needed.
- If appropriate a parent should be encouraged to seek help from the social services.
- Where a parent is unwilling to seek help and the case is one of real concern then Social Services must be contacted for advice.

7.5 Actions that will be taken by the co-ordinators or Senior Leaders for suspicion of sexual abuse

The co-ordinators or Senior Leader will for any allegation or suspicion of abuse:

- Contact the Police Community Liaison Team.
- The parents must NOT be spoken to (or anyone else).
- Under no circumstances should there be an attempt to carry out any investigation into the matter.
- The role of the co-ordinators or Senior Leader is to collect and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and provide this information to the Social services, whose task it is to investigate the matter under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989.
- Exceptionally, should there be any disagreement between the person in receipt of the allegation or suspicion and the co-ordinators (or Senior Leader) as to the appropriateness of referring to the Social Services Department, that person retains a responsibility as a member of the public to report serious matters to the Social Services, and should do so without hesitation.

All actions should be recorded in a confidential file with careful notes of: dates, times, persons involved, details of phone calls and copies of correspondence (see point 9 below for details).

8. An independent person for children

It is a common feature of situations where children have been abused that an adult has exploited their power to gain submission or silence. It is hoped that one benefit of establishing good practice and safe environment for campers is that they feel safe to talk about concerns they have to their Tent Leaders, or other members of the Leadership team. Campers will talk to those people with whom they feel safe and if that is you, you may not feel particularly well-equipped to deal with the matter. For this reason please involve a Senior Leader.

9. Record Keeping

Where there is concern of abuse and any accidents or injuries this should be reported to the child protection co-ordinators. The child protection co-ordinator will then take a brief factual note of the incident or concern, the action taken and the date it occurred. This note is to be kept in the Confidential Records Book held during camp by the First Aider. This record may be of vital importance at a later date, even if nothing is resolved at the time.

Appendix 1: Flow Chart for Action

1. Signs/Symptoms/Child Speaks to You - Is this possible abuse?
Yes - Discuss with child protection coordinators (go to 2)
No - Inform child protection coordinators and no further action

Leaders hands over to Child Protection Coordinators or Senior Leader.

2. Are the symptoms suggestive of sexual abuse and/or is the camper in danger of significant harm if they return home?
Yes - Don't Speak with parents/carers (go to 6)
No - (go to 3)
3. Are symptoms suggestive of poor parenting and parents need help? (Not significant harm)
Yes - Speak to parent/carer. Advise to seek help from GP, Health Visitor or Children's Social Services (go to 4)
No - Monitor situation. Reactivate if necessary. No further action
4. Is this effective?
Yes - No further action
No - Offer to accompany parent/carer to GP, Health Visitor or Children's Social Services (go to 5)
5. Is this effective?
Yes - No further action
No - Contact Children's Social Services, Police or ThirtyOneEight for advice.
6. Is the camper suggesting sexual abuse within the last few days and you can't get hold of Children's Social Services?
Yes - Contact Police immediately
No - Contact Children's Social Services, Police or ThirtyOneEight for advice.