



1.3H GUIDANCE ON USE OF HOMES BY SMALL GROUPS INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE

There may be occasions where it is appropriate for youth groups to meet in the homes of group leaders. This should only take place with the permission of the Parish Panel and the reasoning for this decision recorded by the Panel. Cognisance should be taken of the Safeguarding implications in this regard.

The Church of Ireland understand the social engagement opportunities involved in hosting youth events in a leader's family home, but after consideration of the Safeguarding implications would discourage churches from organising youth events in a private house. The priority is the safeguarding of children, but there are also concerns about the potential risk to church personnel. It is preferable for a group to meet in the church hall. If a local parish decide that using a private home to deliver any of their youth activities is the best option it can do so, but to reduce risks must take the following actions.

Leaders should be aware of the potential risks posed as well as the advantages in relation to such venue. In addition, a member of the panel is required to conduct a Local Safeguarding Risk Assessment.

The Local Safeguarding Risk Assessment should take account of:

- How participants will travel to or from the meeting.
- Potential trip hazards during access and egress.
- Management of household pets.
- Details of relevant allergies and medical conditions and responses where required.
- Removal/management of any hazards which may cause harm, e.g. use of fireguards, catering, electrical devices, etc.
- Any additional needs of participants.
- Finishing time of meeting.
- Bathroom hygiene.
- Managing areas of the home where entry is forbidden.
- Provision of smoke or carbon monoxide detectors (where gas heating, an up-to-date inspection certificate).
- Management of other individuals calling to/residing at the house, who are not involved in the group. Parents should be informed in advance of other adults/children who may be in the family home but are not part of the church meeting. Other adults in the home should not be part of the youth activity taking place unless they are designated leaders/helpers.



- The home-based activity will operate under the same safeguarding policy requirements as youth activities based in church property, but in addition:
 - Record in writing the reasons why using a private home is the best option to the Parish Panel and their permission should be obtained.
 - Adequate insurance cover needs to be evidenced and a first aid kit available.
 - If the youth group is led by a couple, there should be a third adult leader/helper present.
 - Parental consent and emergency contact details completed for all children in advance.
 - Attendance details must be kept.
 - No opportunity for lone working. Two adult leaders should always be present.
 - The programme or event leaders will follow all other safeguarding policy requirements.
 - Church of Ireland photography, filming and social media guidelines should be followed.

Informal gatherings, such as birthday parties, play dates, etc., which are not church-related activities and which are organised by parents/others, would not fall under the remit or the responsibility of the Church of Ireland. If church property is being used for these events, follow the guidance here (**Guidance 1.7A**).