

Returning to In Person Youth Ministry

**Connor Diocese
Guidance for Churches
September 2020**



Guidance for Churches

Introduction

The following guidelines offer a summary of basic requirements and considerations necessary to help you with your parish's return to youth ministry on an 'in-person' or face to face basis.

They are to ensure good judgement is exercised, the highest standards of hygiene are observed and the requirements of social distancing are maintained so that as youth ministry is considered and restarted, parishes can act responsibly and safely.

This document should be read in conjunction with ongoing Church of Ireland advice, the latest government advice and your own parish risk assessment regarding the opening of churches and buildings.

The Church of Ireland Safeguarding policy and each parish's health and safety procedures must also continue to be adhered to as the resumption of these invaluable ministries are considered.

Each Parish will need to consider how this works out in their own context, yet it is encouraged to engage with young people as soon as you can. There is also an awareness that a blended approach may be appropriate, to hold online gatherings and alongside this re-establish in person meetings.



Current Government Guidelines

The latest government guidelines relating to Gatherings operated or organised by a responsible person state:

The thirty person limit does not apply to a gathering where that gathering has a recognised person responsible for organising and operating the gathering and it is organised or operated for cultural, entertainment, recreational, outdoor sports, social, community, educational, work, legal, religious or political purposes.

The person responsible when organising or operating the gathering must;

(a) have carried out a risk assessment which meets the requirements of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000, whether or not that person is subject to those Regulations; and

(b) take all reasonable measures to limit the risk of transmission of the coronavirus, including implementing the preventive and protective measures identified in the risk assessment and comply with any relevant guidance issued by a Northern Ireland Government Department.

The relaxation outlined above does not apply to gatherings relating to indoor sports and therefore the thirty person limit will apply in this context.



Some Basic Questions

- Can you ensure that the number of young people expected, can be accommodated in a suitable space that can comply with social distancing requirements and any ongoing limitations on group size meeting either indoors or outdoors?
- Have you considered how you may ensure that no more young people than you can accommodate show up?
- Do you have enough leaders, remembering that the adult to young people ratios may need to be increased to ensure safe practice in present increasingly complex circumstances surrounding meeting together?
- Have you thought about the leader/young person dynamic and how the requirements of social distancing between young people themselves and young people and their leaders will bring new challenges?
- Do you need to contact or update your insurers about resuming gatherings?

Setting Up

- Volunteers should be informed of and trained, where necessary, in the new procedures for running youth programmes.
- A basic procedure checklist should be available to everyone involved in running these programmes. A sample version is included below.
- Areas should be set up in advance of gathering to best support young people to adhere to the guidelines and for all leaders to be appropriately prepared.
- Consider the implications of social distancing for the location of your gathering. Are there additional aspects in set up you can do to support young people to adhere to the guidance e.g. spacing chairs indoors or taping out advised distances?
- Ensure hand sanitiser is available in various locations and used by all individuals.
- Equipment and materials used should follow appropriate supervision and hygiene practices.

Permission

As groups provide a new permission form for the year ahead they should include an additional permission section regarding Covid-19. Basic forms are available from Christina Baillie and you should consider using the following 'Covid-19' specific text in addition:

Sample wording in respect of Covid-19 is:

The Parish has taken reasonable precautions to limit the risk of Covid-19 including providing hand sanitiser, social distancing, restricting access to facilities and adapting programmes. Upon attending Parish youth event, you / your young person agree to abide by all government guidance aimed at preventing the transmission of the virus including following the steps taken by the Parish to minimise risk. We require you to follow all directions of leaders. You must not attend if you believe that you, or anyone in your household, may have symptoms of Covid-19.

It is recommended to use Google Forms or Google Docs for forms as this provides an accessible format for parents/guardians and can be completed remotely.

For each activity, a registration record should be kept of every young person and leader to ensure 'contact tracing' can take place if needed. Depending on the potential size of the group a pre booking system should be used. This can be done using Google Docs or similar tools. Where you may have to restrict attendance the following sample wording could be used:

We will be adhering to the Government Guidelines on social distancing and other regulations throughout these activities and have completed all relevant risk-assessments and protocols to ensure these activities are as safe as possible. To enable us to maintain these guidelines, we will have a limited number of spaces for each activity which will be given on a first-come, first-serve basis.

If your child or anyone in your household is showing any symptoms of Covid-19, please do not allow them to attend.

All young people must have a permission form for the year ahead completed by their parent/carer and these forms are available at this link/via email/from the office



Arrival and Departure

- Ensure social distancing is observed in areas in which young people are gathering on arrival or departure.
- Allow time for all involved to sanitise or wash their hands on arrival and when leaving the session.
- Ensure new permission forms are completed before a young person is admitted. This information will also be used for contact tracing and parents/carers should be made aware of this.

Toilets

Bathroom facilities should be made accessible. If toilets will not be accessible, parents and young people should be informed of this and any event should have a reasonable time limit e.g. no longer than one hour.

If access to toilets is provided, there should be an agreed procedure for regular checking and supervision during the activity to ensure only one person/family uses the bathrooms at a time. Leaders should be allocated to checking and maintaining hygiene in bathrooms throughout the meeting time and bathrooms should be cleaned fully at the end of an activity.

Programme

Organisations should consider the purpose and programme for an event or gathering. For young people, it is beneficial to provide an opportunity for informal social time. This could include games and discussion. In addition, groups could facilitate Bible study or discussion groups.

In considering elements of a programme it is important to consider whether any activity would limit a participant's ability to maintain social distancing.

Equipment

Any equipment which would need to be passed amongst individuals should be cleaned/wiped down between use e.g. games controllers and sports equipment. Where workbooks or craft materials are used these should be provided and handled individually by the recipient.

Food

Provision of food at this time should be restricted to prepackaged or bought food (such as pizza) unless you have a person qualified in food preparation and your parish risk assessment allows for the preparation and distribution of food.

Cleaning

A cleaning procedure should be agreed and a plan developed for all leaders. If the room you are using will be in use again within 72 hours, you will need to wipe down all chairs, tables, equipment used and surfaces immediately after the session. Ensure you will have access to appropriate cleaning supplies and that these are stored securely once cleaning is completed.

Face Coverings

Face coverings are recommended for church services and for indoor church events, for those aged 13 and over, in line with your risk assessment.

Transport

The use of a church minibus, or even leaders' cars, present issues regarding social distancing and hygiene and should only be used if parental car lifts are not possible. Where young people and leaders are on buses or other transport outside of their family group, they should be wearing face coverings at all times.

Communicating with Families

Organisations should communicate clearly and comprehensively with parents and young people in advance of events or programmes resuming. Arrangements should be clearly communicated including expectations for young people, changes of content and event programming in response to Covid-19. It should be made clear to families the precautions in place to reduce risk.

As you continue to monitor the requirements regarding face coverings, share your expectation and communicate any changes with families.

It must be made clear that any young person displaying any of the symptoms of Covid-19, or who have been in close contact with anyone who has displayed symptoms, should not attend under any circumstances.

If a young person has additional needs, contact the family directly to discuss whether there are any supports which would ease the experience of returning for the individual.

Pastoral

Young people will have had a variety of experiences during the pandemic and now will benefit from pastoral support. Many young people will be seeking to adapt to the ease of restrictions and it will be important to support them through this time of adjustment.

Risk Assessment

An updated risk assessment must be completed which includes any additional risks in respect of the Covid-19 pandemic. A sample risk assessment is included to provide a suggested format.

Sample Activities

Activities for Outdoors

Gather in a local park or grassy area for socially distant games:

- Photo Treasure Hunt
- Scavenger Hunt
- Dodgeball
- Rounders - you could play kick rounders to reduce contact and sanitising.
- Giant Jenga
- Giant 4 Square
- KanJam
- Cornhole
- Chalk drawing in the Parish Car Park
- Spike Ball
- Human Battleships
- Egg Toss

Activities for Indoors:

Meet in small groups for bible study and discussion

Use screen and projector to facilitate games:

- Kahoot - use www.kahoot.com for games and quizzes. Young people can use their own device as a quiz remote.
- Deal or No Deal - recreate the game show using graphics on a presentation.

Have a Movie Night with individual snacks



Sample Activities

Activities for Indoors:

Use large room or hall for socially distant games:

- 'Giant' 4 Square - draw out the court so it is large enough to maintain social distancing
- Ninja
- Bring me a... - adapt this game by asking young people to bring an item and the winner is the first person to get it in a hula hoop in the middle of the room.
- Charades
- Pictionary
- Table Tennis / Pool
- Would You Rather discussion points: Examples [here](#)
- Mafia
- Question Game
- Heads or Tails
- Bingo
- Teeth
- The Pringles Game
- Minute to Win It Games - adapt these by cleaning anything which is reused by young people or having individual use items
- Temple, Tiger, Praying Mantis & Snake: A different action is chosen for each animal by the group. For each turn, the leader in charge, counts down from 5 and does an action. Each individual plays for themselves and if they do the same action as the leader in charge, they are out.
- The Maze
- Great Balls of Paper
- Get to Know You Game
- Splat



Basic Procedure Checklist

What action is needed?	Who is responsible?	Done
<p>Organisations to check the latest government and Church of Ireland guidance. Organisations to plan what can be managed within the guidelines and discuss what works best in the Parish context.</p> <p>Organisations to plan how an event will be managed and purpose of gathering. Consider guidelines and any additional issues which are specific to their context.</p> <p>Complete Risk Assessment.</p> <p>Agree appropriate cleaning procedures and ensure appropriate cleaning supplies are available.</p> <p>Communicate with families informing them with details of the event and if necessary details for registration.</p> <p>Ensure there are enough volunteers to staff the additional requirements regarding social distancing and hygiene.</p> <p>Ensure all registration forms are completed.</p> <p>Set up for the event before participants arrive, including signage & access to hand sanitiser.</p>		

Basic Procedure Checklist

What action is needed?	Who is responsible?	Done
<p>Sign in young people as they arrive, ensuring they have permission forms already completed and that they are aware of the new set up..</p> <p>Remind young people during event about social distancing, face coverings and hygiene.</p> <p>Keep key equipment sanitised during the event.</p> <p>Complete cleaning procedure as agreed.</p> <p>Debrief with leaders and agree to review learning which could affect following events.</p>		



If you have any questions about
this guidance, please contact
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