



Safer Systems and Safer Practice for Youth Work in Private Dwellings

AUTHORS & CONTRIBUTORS

This paper was prepared by a team who came together as a result of responding to a request from the UK Christian Youth Work Consortium. All of them are active in Christian youth work and there have been additional contributions from other practitioners.

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Safer Systems and Safer Practice for Youth Work in Private Dwellings

A presentation to the 4th Commonwealth Conference on Youth Work, aligning with both:

- 1 Celebration and promotion of Youth Work and
- 4 Youth Work's role in the encouragement and development of peace.

OPENING

I would like to thank the organisers of the Commonwealth Conference on Youth Work for the opportunity to present our paper to you. My name is David Howell and I facilitate the Christian Youth Work Consortium, bringing together churches and Christian agencies from across the UK who are committed to working with and serving young people. Also taking part today will be Dominic Sutton who is UK & Ireland Operations Director and Executive Safeguarding Officer for Young Life International, a Christian youth organisation that engages with 1.6 million young people worldwide.

The purposes of this paper are two-fold. First to recognise the importance and value of the "home" in the personal, social, spiritual and educational development of young people and secondly, to encourage the practice of safe youth work within homes – whether that be those of the young people, or those of the youth workers committed to serving and living their faith in the local area, or those of faith community members who open their homes as part of their commitment to the spiritual development of young people.

BACKGROUND

At its heart, *'Youth work is a distinct educational process adapted across a variety of settings to support a young person's personal, social and educational development (NYA, 2023)*. It exists to enable young people:

- To explore their values, beliefs, ideas and issues
- To enable them to develop their voice, influence and place in society
- To acquire a set of practical or technical skills and competencies, to realise their full potential (NYA, 2023)

And to this, those of us in the faith communities we would add 'spiritual development' as found in the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work (NOS), section B1:

'Facilitate the personal, social, spiritual and educational development of young people
(CLD, 2019)

PANDEMIC

During the Covid-19 pandemic, youth work had to urgently rethink its practice as a result of rapidly changing government regulations, especially with regards to mixing generally and in private dwellings. Within the Christian faith community, youth work had been taking place in private dwellings for many years and the cessation of this particular *locus operandi*, together with the challenges of careful re-opening, have provided us with an opportunity to reflect on this space in which we undertake youth work.

VALUE

Across the world, as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989) there is a presumption that "home", within a family, should be the safest and most important place for human development and flourishing. The preamble to the 'Rights' states that the parties to the Convention are:

'Convinced that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community, (UNICEF, 1989, p3)

In addition the parties to the Convention stated:

'Recognizing that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding, (UNICEF (1989) p3)

As well as the fully recognised benefits of working with young people within homes, for example in fostering and adoption, we have reflected additionally on potential risks, as highlighted by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) which has been reporting to the UK government. (IICSA, 2022)

The Christian youth work community in the UK, both churches and Christian agencies - sometimes referred to as para-church organisations - are currently considering this mode of working and formulating guidelines for policy and practice. This work is being supported by Churches Together in England and will seek to ensure that young people are kept safe and gain the most in their personal, social and spiritual development as a result of youth work in homes.

TERMINOLOGY

Legally, within the UK, the term used for those who are under 18 years of age is 'children'. For those of us committed to youth work, in the English context we generally regard young people as those who have moved from primary to secondary education, normally when they have reached 11 years of age, and concludes when they reach adulthood, and the end of formal education, at 18 years of age.

The National Youth Agency, (the body who are providing the administration of this conference), suggest that *Youth work predominantly works with young people of secondary school age between 11 and 19 years, but is designed to support young people through adolescence, typically from ages 8 to 25* (NYA, 2022)

For the purposes of this paper we will be using the term 'child' to mean those up to 11 years of age and the term 'young people' for those aged 11 to 18 years of age, and occasionally, especially when dealing with legal statements and statutes, referring to all those up to 18 years of age as 'children'.

The locations being considered by this paper are 'private dwellings'. This refers to any house, garden, land or outbuildings which are owned privately and are thus normally closed to general access. In addition to 'private dwellings' we will be using the term 'home', to represent the place where a young person, a youth worker, or a member of a faith-community lives.

U.K. SETTING

We recognise that youth work, both the understanding of the term and the practice, must vary across the Commonwealth, and this paper is written from the UK perspective where youth work refers to the process of informal education which values and recognises voluntary participation, empowerment, and the principles of equality and diversity.

FUNDING

Within the UK there are different approaches across the four nations to this work. In the English context, open youth work provided by the state (The Youth Service), where young people can meet socially and without an agenda has declined, due to reduced funding by local government authorities. The decline has been a direct result of the government's austerity measures from 2008/09 onwards which have resulted in reduced monies going out to local authorities from central government. Because youth work has not been regarded by governments as a 'legally-required' activity, local authorities with less funds have concentrated their work on the commitments that they have a legal responsibility for, especially to provide formal education for children and to provide social care across all ages. As a result of the decline of local authority youth work, it is generally accepted that the majority of work with young people is now undertaken by the voluntary/community sector rather than by the local authority. The Christian church and Christian faith-based organisations are, together, a significant provider of youth work across the UK.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Youth Work undertaken generally, especially by local authorities, has always worked on the basis of relating directly to and with the young person (within safeguarding boundaries). This voluntary participation has recognised the young person's growth towards adulthood as an individual and has generally kept the worker's relationship with parents/carers at arms-length. This has meant that the majority of the work has taken place away from the private dwellings of the children and young people and more often in local halls and youth centres, prior to the austerity measures!

FAITH COMMUNITIES

Within the faith-based sectors there has generally been a different approach due to the greater and more complex sets of relationships between all of those who belong to faith communities. In these settings there are often pre-existing friendships between workers and parents, with many parents being active leaders within the youth and children's work. Youth workers have often known both the young people and their parents/carers for many years.

At the same time there are occasions with the faith-based sector when youth work takes place in homes (private dwellings) as a result of the belief systems of the faith communities and the strong place of hospitality in many of the major world religions. For the Christian faith-based sector this had been normal through the years before Christ, and has been a key element of the Christian church since the Christ event. One purpose of this paper is to explore this difference from local authority work, and to affirm the value of appropriate and safe working in the homes of young people, youth workers and/or faith community members.

SAFEGUARDING

The authors of this paper, and those contributing, all of whom are practitioners within churches or Christian agencies, are committed to the principles and practice of keeping children safe. We totally support the statement of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse that *A child protection policy is the basic foundation on which organisations working with children should build their practices to keep children safe* (IICSA 2021 p vi), and encourage all the organisations that we work with to have established and implemented their Safeguarding Policy, in line with government advice.

It is with immense sadness that we note that there have been occasions when children have been abused and, sadly, this awful practice continues in some settings, to this day.

For those within the Christian faith community it is especially abhorrent due to the high value that our faith gives to humanity through being made in the image of God and the special position of children which was emphasised through the teaching and actions of Jesus Christ.

The aim of this paper and the work that it is linked to it, is to enable youth work to take place safely, effectively and powerfully through the setting of clear boundaries and practices which value every young person as a child of God.

The work with church denominations and Christian agencies on developing and enhancing safer practice is underpinned by a commitment to safeguarding and driven by the importance of, and value of each child and young person, whom we see as created by God.

CONTEXT

The context and circumstances of youth work in private dwellings is varied and diverse. Drawing on our shared experience of direct work in homes and private dwellings we have sought to identify the common purposes and practices of youth work in these settings.

Definitions

This paper seeks to consider all youth work activity with a young person or group of young people which takes place in a private dwelling/home.

By this we include:

- any activity in the private dwelling of a staff member or volunteer
- any activity in the private dwelling of a child, young person or young adult
- any activity in the home of a faith community member

The Experience

Young people themselves are aware of the fact that a home setting, almost any home, can afford benefits to their personal, social and spiritual development.

Writing of her experience of youth work in a Leeds church, one young person said:

‘I think for me the general ease and comfort is what I appreciate; being able to relax on a sofa, the environment being less influential (such as a church building), perhaps encouraging more care in what’s being said- which can be a good thing, I think all this contributes to a more open and intimate discussion which works well for our group.

The youth worker leading the small group was also aware of the value of the home:

‘As a leader of a small youth group, I really appreciate the benefits of being able to meet in my home. We partly meet at my house for practical reasons - our church doesn't own its own building. I also enjoy being able to host the young people and I think it helps them to feel part of the church family. We enjoy catching up and having discussions about a range of issues, in a comfortable, warm, safe environment. We always ensure safety, for example by having two leaders present, by sharing the location and meeting details with parents, by keeping a record of who was present, and by regularly attending safeguarding training.

The Youthscape Centre for Research conducted a survey in 2021 on the value of three Relational Hubs – after-school drop-in venues run by Christian churches and agencies in the South East of England. Their resulting report was titled ‘Feels Like Home’ (Youthscape ,2021) and captured the value of the home to the young people:

‘Across all three locations, the youth hubs were described as places with a warm and positive atmosphere that made young people feel welcome. ... fun places to socialise and meet new people; well-equipped with things to do and attractive environments that feel homely. each drop-in was a ‘safe place’, where youth workers maintained boundaries that protected this positive atmosphere. Young people valued the freedom to engage as much or as little as they wanted in the drop-in and contrasted this with the structure of school life. They appreciated youth workers being accessible every day after school, which meant they could chat to them as and when they wanted. (Youthscape, 2021)

One 16yr old male commented on his local Relational Hub (The Bell Tower) in this way:

“...wherever the Bell Tower goes, it still feels like home. Like, we had to relocate, but it still feels like a home.” (Youthscape, 2021)

Purposes & Scope

The purpose of youth and community work in a private dwelling echoes the reasons and purposes of youth and community work across the sector. This is work primarily within the NOS framework of Informal Education, Participation, Empowerment and Equality (CLD, 2019)

Within the faith sector we have intentionally and thoughtfully developed approaches to working with young people that are built on safe, positive, and mutual relationships. Although we are not alone in this approach, we have a distinctive understanding and set of experiences of youth work that include the process of 'journeying with' young people. This approach places the core principles of youth and community work in the lens of mutuality and journey, inevitably increasing the development of practice grounded in safe, genuine 'friend-like' relationships and the 'real-lives' of volunteers and practitioners. Our aim is to see the personal, social and spiritual development of all young people through this work.

For this reason, the faith sector (among others) have developed safe practices for working with young people in private dwellings. The scope of this work includes:

- Relational youth work
- Group Work
- Learning & Personal Development
- Mentoring
- Support Work
- Community Participation (i.e. planning, governance, etc)
- Volunteer (or Employment) Supervision
- Involvement in family or community life (of host and/or of guest)
- Increasing trust and understanding.
- Celebrations and Life Events
- Role modelling
- Accompanying and Journeying together with young people

Settings

Working with young people in their home, or the homes of other young people, or of members of a faith-community can come about through a number of reasons:

- A charity that has volunteers or staff who have moved to a particular neighbourhood to be involved in youth and community work
- A youth work project that offers mentoring and support in the home of young people through home-visits.
- Youth work which seeks to accommodate the particular needs of a young person (e.g. additional needs, issues relating to adoption, mental health, etc), who could only attend the youth group or participate in mentoring if it occurred in their own home.
- A youth work project where teams of young people and leaders serve residents in their local community by doing/helping with manual tasks (e.g. painting/decorating, clearing gardens, helping a neighbour move house, etc.).
- Opportunities for exploring spirituality (seen as a common element of existence of all children and young people)

For faith communities this could be seen through:

- A faith community that has no suitable venue so meet in a suitable house or garden of a volunteer or faith community member
- A faith community that hold planning meetings in the houses of members and want to include young people in decision making
- Events for faith-development for young people, which, within the Christian faith community could include bible-study, prayer, worship, discussions and food!

Other Settings & Practices

The faith sector is not alone in working in private dwellings or similar 'home-like' spaces as a venue that is safe and nurturing for work with young people. In some cases the 'home' is a preferred venue to a community centre or organisation's building.

Examples of other forms of work with young people which takes place in homes can include:

Education for those experiencing school-phobia or those unable to access school

Fostering and Adoption

Supported Lodgings

Respite Care

Private Academic Tutoring

Music Lessons – either in the child's home or a tutor's home

Care assessments

Some of the examples listed above already have extensive policy and principles in place in order to ensure the health, safety and safeguarding of the children and young people.

PRINCIPLES & APPROACHES

In order to develop this set of safer working practices within the Christian faith-based youth work community an open invitation was made to practitioners and managers across the sector to bring together the learning and practice which will benefit the sector and the children and young people. From that learning we are in the process of developing key principles and approaches to enable such work to be safer and to enable the development of each and every young person.

The church and faith sector has a rich tradition of working with children, young people and communities in homes and private dwellings. The purposes and methods of this approach are wide and varied. In this section we outline the leading reasons why practitioners and community groups may opt for an approach to working with children and young people situated in private dwellings – and why in some situations it is considered preferential. This includes both activities in the houses of children and young people, and activities in the houses of workers, volunteers, and community group members.

Our key principles and approaches include:

Establishing relationships of trust

- Enabling nurture and growth
- Participating in the life of the community
- Engaging with young people and
- Monitoring the availability/access of spaces

Relationships of Trust

The principles and practices of youth and community work, outlined within the National Occupational Standards of the sector, establish a framework for quality youth work practice on the basis of informal education, voluntary participation, empowerment and equality (CLD, 2019).

Across the sector there is consensus in approach that these principles are delivered primarily through building positive relationships of trust with young people. In the history of youth work, the faith sector has played a key role in establishing these principles as the building blocks of quality work with children and young people in the community.

In the Christian faith sector we have developed a distinctive tradition of 'relational youth work' where we journey with young people, with safe working practices that are constructed around positive, mutual relationships, where the youth work process is most effective when shaped around a mutual-relationship between the practitioner and a young person (Ward, 1997).

Within this frame of reference, hospitality and vulnerability, within appropriate boundaries, are key components in building strong positive relationships. This includes a willingness to welcome others into your spaces, an openness and vulnerability of relationship, and the opportunity to be aware of aspects of each other's personal life. The use of private dwellings increases and deepens these opportunities for quality relationships that facilitate the core discipline of youth work, enabling the young person to develop personally, socially, spiritually and educationally.

Nurture and Growth

The space of the private dwelling is uniquely welcoming and has a distinctive nurturing potential. This is why so many community spaces are fitted-out like living rooms – but they seldom compare.

It is also one of the key reasons that residential experiences are so effective. Other than the quality extended time, the 'living-together' and creating a home-space offer an opportunity for the whole group to get an insight into each other's lives, including that of the adults/workers. It creates deeper relationships and opens up important conversations. The nurturing environment of the private dwelling is a key reason for opening these spaces for work with children and young people.

As a society our most vulnerable children and young people, those with no safe family of their own, are placed with safe adults in nurturing private dwellings (homes) through fostering and adoption. The welcoming, small-scale 'normal life' setting of the home fosters an aspect of informal education around care, inclusion and valuing individuals. The opportunity to role-model safe and supportive home/family life is unparalleled, especially for those children and young people who have poor experiences of their own home/family.

Participation in the life of a community

Homes and private dwellings are often the space of community life, of a neighbourhood and also of faith communities. Participating in the life of the community can often include meetings, events and groups in the private dwellings of community members. These are spaces where the community engages in decision-making and in marking important life stages and celebratory events.

Homes are also fertile contexts for serving the practical needs of young people and their families, and encouraging their peers to grow in their personal development by undertaking community service. Community work practice must engage with the culture and context of the community it is working with. Many civil society groups meet in homes including planning committees, micro-grant panels, book clubs and political groups.

Furthermore, our faith communities have rich histories of hospitality and service within the home. In the church we treasure stories of how Jesus met and ate with people in their homes, and of the first Christians who valued the practice of hospitality by inviting people into their own homes. Throughout history, homes have been important places for the Christian faith to be lived out practically, and safe spaces into which the most vulnerable can be invited and cared for. Many faith communities, including churches, still regularly meet in homes, either as small churches or in smaller subsets of larger communities (often called 'home groups'). In many churches this includes work with children and young people, who may be part of a mixed 'home group' or a dedicated youth group. We believe that youth work principles and practices can, and should, be found within the faith traditions of our communities. This means identifying safe practices to adapt these valued traditions in ways that work for communities generally and communities of faith in particular.

Engaging with young people

The use of the private dwelling can be a particularly powerful tool for engagement. Speaking at the Youthscape/St Mellitus Annual Lecture in May 2023, Chloe Combi presented the challenging fact that young people have 50% fewer 'in-real-life' experiences now than they did in 2020 (Youthscape, 2023). She spoke about the fact that young people today are statistically less likely to roam as far from home as they did, less likely to spend time socially out of doors and in public spaces, preferring instead to occupy online spaces from their homes. Many previously public spaces such as shopping centres are now 'out of bounds', and 'in-real-life' social contact has halved for teenagers since 2000 (Youthscape, 2023). These factors combine to make provision in private dwellings more important to young people. This is particularly true when visiting young people in their own homes.

At the same time engagement can be more effective in homes where the young people feel safer than a public community or church building. This is an increasingly important part of accessible provision that responds to the needs of young people in a generation with record levels of loneliness and poor well-being.

Furthermore, when workers/volunteers/members share the lived-experience of a hard-to-reach neighbourhood they are working with (or move into a neighbourhood in order to share), they can

build a unique and distinctive form of trust. In doing so, they use the same local services, live in the same kind of housing, face the same local geography, and share the experiences of any local disruption. This opens avenues for conversation and collaboration, and moves the relationship akin to neighbour.

Using home based settings can also be an important way to engage with those whose culture is much more hospitality-driven than traditionally has been the case among existing communities in the UK. Those involved in youth work have found that an essential part of building trust and a sense of belonging with those from Middle Eastern, Asian and African cultures involves allowing them to host activities and eat together in their home environment.

Availability and Access

In a number of communities, particularly within more deprived areas, where young people do not have easy access to appropriate free venues for activities, the use of private dwellings helps to ensure youth work is available to those young people. In some rural communities, the cost and unreliability of public transport has been prohibitive to hosting youth events in public places and/or spaces such as community centres. In these situations, meeting locally in young people's houses has been the only viable way to ensure regular and sustained youth work provision.

SAFER WORKING PRACTICES

Having established the values of working with young people in homes, we recognise that this work presents a unique set of benefits, but also risks and challenges, which this section seeks to address.

Out of the experience of youth workers across the Christian faith-based sector, we are bringing together a number of principles for safer practice when working with children and young people in private dwellings.

These are:

- Seeing safeguarding as a first priority
- Safely managing vulnerability
- Establishing appropriate boundaries
- Seeking Informed consent
- Ensuring the suitability of venues and workers
- The different environmental risks of a home
- Ensuring privacy and security
- Being a good neighbour

Safeguarding

All work with children and young people must be undertaken within the safeguarding policy and practice of the organisation that has oversight of and responsibility for the activity. This includes

all work in private dwellings and the guidance in this section is intended to complement and inform that safeguarding practice. It is the responsibility of the organisation's management to consider this guidance in the light of the needs and demands of their context, practice and safeguarding framework.

Essential safeguarding practice will always include:

- Safer Recruitment of all adults working with children, young people and vulnerable adults, including references, interview, application form and a DBS Enhanced-Level check

- Induction and training for all staff, workers and volunteers

- Clear definitions of abuse and safe practice

- A clear process of recording and reporting disclosures and concerns

- A code of conduct for staff, workers and volunteers

- Clear minimum ratios of adults to children based on age/setting

- Day-to-day record keeping and registers

The high standards of safeguarding that we expect across the range of venues and locations used by the sector apply equally to activity in all settings, including private dwellings.

Sadly, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse noted that many occasions of abuse took place in the home setting (IICSA, 2021; IICSA, 2022; EECSA 2021,2). It is the expectation of the writers of this report that raising the awareness of safeguarding through trained workers, and the 'safety' of the home settings will enable young people to voice their concerns and for perpetrators to be brought to justice.

Managed Vulnerability

The principle risk of working with children and young people in private dwellings is the real and perceived increase in closeness and familiarity between the worker and the young person. This is primarily affected by the intentional act of giving and receiving hospitality, which includes a warm welcome, an openness of relationship, and encountering the personal life of the host. The increase in closeness and vulnerability produced in this exchange is both the greatest strength (developing a relationship of trust) and the greatest risk to working with children and young people in private dwellings.

Workers must be aware of inappropriate boundaries in relationships forming between adults and young people, avoiding access to intimate personal items and spaces that are usually private (i.e. underwear drying on radiators or seeing inside bedrooms) and an increased vulnerability to and opportunity for emotional abuse and coercion, radicalisation and indoctrination, grooming and favouritism and physical and sexual abuse

At the same time hosts need to ensure that young people are not exposed to conflict within the home (i.e. arguments or domestic violence). The young people should not be seen as an audience before which to play out a breakdown of a relationship. Those visiting the home should not enter the private or personal living spaces of those who live there.

Hosts and workers will also need to ensure that safeguarding disclosures are effectively and consistently reported, and ensure that the safeguarding policy is in place, understood and followed. They will also need to ensure that a suitable supervision structure is in place for work and that they never work alone with young people (neither hosting, nor leading nor visiting)

Those managing the safer recruitment should ensure that the DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) application form has the option for work in the home ticked.

Appropriate boundaries

One of the key needs of youth work generally and of work which involves the home, is the setting of appropriate boundaries. Because the home is a place of safety and vulnerability, it is all the more important to ensure that any work which takes place there provides for the safety of the young person and the worker, and enables human flourishing.

This means that there need to be boundaries regarding ratios of young people and youth workers, boundaries of access to private areas of a home and boundaries of activities together and boundaries regarding appropriate conduct and behaviour. All of these are common to youth work generally, but need to be brought to the fore when working in home settings.

Informed Consent

Youth Work is built on voluntary participation. The use of private dwellings requires additional care to ensure the high standards of informed consent are maintained, for children and young people, for their parents, and for our staff, volunteers and those living in the home.

As informed consent needs to be given by the parent, carer or guardian of the young person, the inclusion of the details of the location and address of the work, regardless of where it takes place, is an important element of the transparency of activity required for those with responsibility for the children/young people to respond to.

The informed consent form will need to be accompanied by explanatory notes which enable the parent/carer/guardian to understand how to raise any concerns at any stage. All young people under 18 years of age must have a consent form signed by a parent/carer/guardian to give permission to visit a private dwelling unaccompanied, and this form will need to be updated annually. At the same time those young people who stay in the group beyond their 18th birthday will need to understand their responsibility as an adult within the group.

Suitability

When establishing work with young people, it is always important to consider the 'when and where' of the project. By necessity this consideration always balances the needs of the young people with the availability, affordability and appropriateness of space. There are times when the use of a private dwelling is ideal for the planned work, but there are also considerations that make the private dwelling inappropriate for a particular piece of work. Depending upon the size of the group the room available may be too small or the design of the house does not allow other members of the family/household to have their own space when the youth work is taking place.

Suitability is also important to consider in order to ensure that the venue can be accessed by all young people regardless of any disability. This could include a suitable downstairs bathroom, or the young people may not be able to access the venue due to distance, lack of public transport, or no step-free access.

A risk assessment will need to be undertaken by the body responsible for the work and mitigations put in place.

Environmental Risk

The private dwelling presents a different profile of risks from that of a local authority youth centre, community space or church building. In many ways, due to its nature, the private dwelling is 'untamed' and 'lived-in' which makes it ideal for relational work. The sanitised or institutionalised nature of some community spaces make the private dwelling preferable in some circumstances. Nevertheless, this presents additional risks of injury and to privacy that require consideration and, in some cases, a dynamic and bespoke approach to risk assessment.

The key risks presented by the environment could be injury caused by an unsafe environment including buildings, garden, ponds, uneven floors, steps, furniture, and untidy spaces, or injury caused by access to dangerous equipment and materials found in the private dwelling that are not secured (i.e. kitchen knives, toolboxes, drills, bleach, razors). There are the usual risks of injury from activities (i.e. games, cooking) but with the additional risks presented by the setting (e.g. games in an open plan kitchen), or food poisoning from food served in an unregulated 'home' kitchen, or BBQ in the garden.

It will be important to ensure appropriate access to clean, private toilet and bathroom facilities is available.

Privacy and Security

Opening up a private dwelling for work in the community has the potential to attract unwanted and undesirable activity that may cause upset, harm or disturbance to the owner/resident and their neighbours. These risks must primarily be managed through building trust with guests and neighbours.

Some of the risks to privacy and security could be callers to the house at anti-social hours that disturb personal/family life, hosts feeling unable to maintain boundaries, or keeping time to rest or for family life, or unable to refuse visitors. It will also be important to assess the risk of injury or assault from visitors to the house, damage to the property caused by guests, potentially attracting unwanted guests, damage or antisocial behaviour to the house or street.

It will be essential that the host takes responsibility for ensuring that restricted data and documents (including access to computers) are kept out of sight, ideally locked or password protected (in line with all GDPR requirements). Also that suitable insurance is in place for the property and the activities being undertaken

The church or Christian agency responsible for the activity should contact their insurance provider to find out what their public liability insurance covers. If the person concerned is employed by the

church/agency then there needs to be an Employer's Liability policy in place to cover employees (some policies would regard volunteers as employees also, for the purpose of insurance cover).

For gatherings that take place in private dwellings, it will be important for hosts to check if their home insurance would cover this or if their insurance would need to be extended. Some home insurance policies may exclude functions held for business purposes in homes. If that is the case, the church/agency should find out if their public liability insurance would cover meetings for business purposes held away from Church dwellings.

Neighbours

It will be important, both for the safety of the young people and for the awareness and support of the neighbours, that they are aware of any groups of young people who may be meeting at a property. (The summer months especially seem to bring out more noise from our young people when they leave the house. Fortunately it is just after 9pm and thus not too late to disturb!)

Neighbours also need to know that there are safeguards in place, both for the young people and the local residents and hosts will need to have established good relationships with those who live locally.

CONCLUSION/IMPLICATIONS

We trust we have enabled you to catch the importance of the home for youth work. The purposes of this paper have been two-fold. First to recognise the importance and value of the home in the personal, social, spiritual and educational development of young people and second, to encourage the practice of safe youth work within homes – those of the young people and those of youth workers committed to serving and living their faith in the local area and those of faith community members as part of their commitment to the spiritual development of young people.

Christian churches and agencies have been improving their safeguarding policies and practice and we are seeking to enable work within private dwellings to have clear and robust guidelines in order to provide safer locations and safer systems for all our young people.

AUTHORS & CONTRIBUTORS

This paper was prepared by a team who came together as a result of responding to a request from the UK Christian Youth Work Consortium. All of them are active in Christian youth work and there have been additional contributions from other practitioners.

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...and other youth workers from across the four nations of the United Kingdom.

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For safeguarding advice contact your local safeguarding board, denominational body, national agency, or organisations such as thirtyone:eight who provide a safeguarding advice service to the Christian faith community <https://thirtyoneeight.org/>