

Meeting with young people outdoors



The relaxing of lockdown restrictions enables the starting of some ministry activities and services in person. For the young people in our communities that have been particularly struggling during the pandemic, safely meeting them for a short time to talk and pray is now safely possible and could be hugely beneficial after months of minimal contact.

Meeting with small groups of young people outdoors could be a great way to offer discipleship and aid wellbeing during the summer and work well in conjunction with online events, private prayer and any formal services that may come back to our church buildings.

My hope is that this document will aid your thinking about how our churches might continue to safely reach out to young people with the love of Jesus, in a time of heightened anxiety, dislocation and isolation.

Meeting outdoors won't work for everyone and in every context. For some it will be too soon and for others it won't be feasible. Safety is paramount and The St Albans Diocesan Youth Service also has idea sheets for online youth groups and tips for social media, which can complement meeting outdoors and give ideas for supporting young people who continue to stay at home.

Praying for you and the young people you support,

Christian
(Youth Missioner)

Why is a youth meet-up important?

While we have seen pictures of young people in the media not following social distancing rules, it's key to note that the majority of young people are taking the pandemic very seriously and acting wisely. They have had little contact with others offline and few chances to process the huge disruption to their lives. It will be important to talk to the young people in your congregation and plan together how to support one another during this very different summer term. We have begun to see reports of the great impact the pandemic has had on young people's wellbeing. Worries about lost education, cancelled exams and reduced opportunities in the years ahead are prevalent, many calling themselves 'The Covid Generation'. Young people have wisdom, energy and passion to offer in this season but will need support even as we move out of lockdown.

Check you have the following in place before going ahead with an outdoor youth meeting.

- An updated safeguarding policy and safely recruited leaders
- An updated risk assessment
- Recorded parental consent
- PCC approval and relevant insurance
- An agreed action plan for the meeting including content, duration and attendees.

In this pack you will find:

- A 'things to consider' guide
- Links to key websites you will need to frequently check for up-to-date information.
- A simple session outline
- A template risk management doc (attached)
- A template parental consent form

Things to consider when planning your meeting

Purpose

Pray and talk to families about using the time well. Particularly after putting all the work in to make it happen! Be sure to share your hopes for the meeting in advance, having asked the young people what they would find helpful.

Not for all

Some young people won't be comfortable or able to meet in this way. Ensure you have other opportunities for young people to be part of the church community, with space to share their experiences and receive input. You will need to check with carers to consider and plan for young people who are more vulnerable to infection have been in 'shielding' households.

Transport arrangements

Although you won't be able to arrange transport for young people, think carefully about how they will get to and from the meeting location safely.

Checking Latest Advice

Frequently check all the latest guidelines, laws and advice before your meeting. Check the national government advice, local authority advice and National Youth Agency readiness level before deciding to run a meet-up. Some restrictions may have been paused on one week but reintroduced the next.

Location

This will be an important choice for the atmosphere of the meeting. A public park may be convenient but check how busy it gets and whether social distancing can be maintained.

A church yard could be quiet and aid spiritual focus, but check insurance and relevant guidelines. In private gardens, direct access should be used if at all possible, rather than travelling indoors.

Numbers

At the time of writing, the law dictates that only up to 6 people of different households may meet at once. Think about how you will end the meeting and disperse young people if more than 6 arrive. Talk about this to young people when planning the event.

Social Distancing

Plan where each person will sit, enabling everyone to sit comfortable 2 meters apart.

Communicating invitations and friendships.

Don't use public invitations on social media or mass email etc as there is a risk that others may arrive and push the total numbers over the maximum number. Remember that young people would generally go to social events with friends and are sorely missing the support of friendship groups. If your church has a larger youth group, think about how you can break them into smaller groups to meet, considering friendship groups and making sure no one is left out.

Leaders

There must be at least two safely recruited adult leaders at the meeting. Check your safeguarding policy and talk to your parish's safeguarding lead about keeping safe and how to report concerns. Consider how you will ensure reporting procedures and contact details of the safeguarding officer are displayed.

Equipment and Facilities.

Sharing equipment i.e. chairs and blankets, can increase risk of transmission. Consider the feasibility of cleaning chairs after use. Read the government rules and advice to minimise risk. If possible, ask young people to bring something to sit on and check for up-to-date guidance on the day of the meeting.

Toilets

Check for up-to-date government guidelines and follow them closely. Clearly show your considerations for reducing transmission in your risk assessment. If toilets will not be available, for instance if meeting in a park, ensure this is well communicated beforehand.

Before and after the meeting

Consider how to encourage young people to keep social distance before and after your scheduled meeting. There may be a temptation for them to leave together or remain in the outdoor space after you have left, where possible, talk to a parent/carer and young people themselves about planning the whole time they're outside their homes.

Length

Meetings should be short and end times agreed and communicated beforehand. Be ready in case there are requests to extend the meeting as some young people may be reluctant to return home.

Communicating to parents/carers and young people

Write out how the meeting will run and send this to the parent/carer before the date of the meeting with a chance to answer any questions the family may have.

Weather

Check the weather! You may need to cancel the event if rain is forecast.

Sports and Games

Many youth groups love to play games when they get together. To avoid disappointment, talk to young people about the plans for the meeting, reminding them what isn't possible. Any sports or games that pose any risk of impinging on social distancing should be avoided from the start.

First Aid

One leader will need to act as a designated first aider with adequate training and first aid kit.

Links

Gov frequently asked questions on what you can and can't do

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>

Gov guidelines for meeting people outside your household

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-people-from-outside-your-household>

National Youth Agency COVID19 advice page

<https://nya.org.uk/guidance/>

Managing youth sector activities guide from The National Youth Agency

https://nya.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/0877-NYA-Activity-guide-COVID-19-final_17_06_20-1.pdf

Church of England National Guidance

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>

Mission and Ministry with Children, Young People and Families

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-07///COVID%2019%20Mission%20and%20ministry%20with%20children%20and%20young%20people%20v1.0.pdf>

Diocesan Safeguarding Webpages

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/diocese/safeguarding/>

Diocesan One-Stop Shop

<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/faith/living-gods-love-at-all-times/>

Outdoor Youth Catch Up (Parent/Carer letter and consent form).

Dear Parent/Carer,

Here at (...) we know it's a tough time for young people so we would like to offer a further opportunity for young people to receive some support and encouragement with an outdoors meet-up. The current social distancing measures allow groups to meet outside and therefore, we have planned an opportunity for young people to meet together to catch up, share how they are doing and pray. If they want to join us, they'll need to follow strict social distancing measures but we have worked hard to make sure this meeting is as safe as possible.

You can find our full safeguarding policy here:

Our safeguarding officer is: _____ Their contact details are: _____

You can find full plans for our meeting here. ***(you could adapt the things to consider' bullet points into full guidelines for your meeting).***

We are continuing to pray for you during this time and we hope this meeting will be encouraging and restorative. Do get in touch for more information about our plans.

How it will work

We will meet: **(place)**

Leaders will be: **(names)**

On: **(Date and Time)**

Your young person may wish to bring: **(Bible/pen/notebook/bottle of water)**

Consent

I consent to the named young person joining the 'Outdoor Youth Catch-Up Meeting 'and understand that...

- There will **be/no** toilets available and we **can/can't** provide snacks or drinks.
- We may have to call off the meeting due to poor weather.
- We ask that you plan safe transport arrangements with your young person.
- Young people will need to leave promptly at the end of the session.
- If your young person breaks the social distancing rules or puts other at risk, we will call you and ask them to be collected.
- The named young person is not extra vulnerable to infection and my household has not been 'shielding'.

(Please give details if this is the case and get in touch to see if we can make safe arrangements- depending on current government guidelines)

- The named young person is not displaying any symptoms of COVID19.
- The named young person has not been asked to self-isolate.

Name of young person

Name of Parent/Carer

I can be contacted during the event on this telephone number.....

Signed..... Date.....

Note:

-If you don't have a 'general 'consent form for the young people involved in the meeting, you may also need to obtain a home address, ask for any medical or behavioural factors that leaders will need to consider.

- Remember to note how you will store and use this data.

Simple Session Plan Idea

You might want to use the time to simply chat together, but I would suggest some kind of plan to fall back on, geared to the young people you're meeting.

Set up

Meet with other leaders before the meeting is due to start. Plan where everyone will sit, staying 2 meters apart. Mark this out if possible. A circle could work well. Pray together before young people arrive.

Intros,

Make any adjustments to the set up to ensure everyone is comfortable and correctly distanced apart. Quickly recap on what we can and can't do during our time together, and that you have phone numbers or parent or carer to hand!

Icebreaker

Ask everyone what they had for breakfast, then ask what their ideal breakfast would be. And/or try playing 'Two Truths and a Lie' (if possible, tell the group before meeting so they can plan ahead).

Listening and sharing exercise

In this exercise, everyone will get a chance to talk about what's going on for them this week. The challenge is to talk for three minutes about 'how it's going' with a few stops as possible. There are three roles in this exercise, and we will swap until everyone gets a turn.

Role 1: Speaker – their job is to do the talking

Role 2: Listener – their job is to listen and if needed, ask the speaker a question to prompt them if they get stuck!

Role 3: Timer – They will time three minutes on their phone.

Bible verse Read a Bible verse that you have found helpful/comforting/strengthening during lockdown and why.

Or

Read Mark 4:35-41

Reflection

When the going gets tough, Jesus' friends ask 'Do you not care?'. Jesus cares about what is going on in our lives, he wants you to talk to him about it all. It really helps to share, especially at the moment, during all the weirdness. Talking for three minutes was tough, but it felt good didn't it? Let's make sure we give our friends and family time... listen to them without judging or telling them what to do. And let's take time to share with God, asking for His peace into our lives".

Prayer

Ask everyone to pray together, out loud, for each other. Then invite the group to be quiet for a moment, look up at the sky and bring their own prayers to God.

Parish of _____

Activity risk assessment ideas for a youth outdoor meet-up

Activity: Outdoor Youth Meet-Up

Date of first risk assessment:

Date to be reviewed:

Time:

Location:

Name of leader with responsibility:

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	Do you need to do anything else to manage this risk?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done
Transmission of Covid19 through furniture and other surfaces.	Leaders, young people and their families passing the virus through touching surfaces.	Attendees encouraged to bring their own blanket to sit on.	Any furniture i.e. camping chairs and blankets cleaned after use and not reused for 12 hours.			
Transmission of Covid19 through young people in close proximity	Leaders, young people and their families via airborne transmission	Plan meeting place with current social distance guidelines outlined marked and communicated. Strict code of conduct.	Clearly communicate and agree rules with young people and carers prior to meeting. Plan where everyone will sit before meeting, marking out where possible.			
Transmission of Covid19 to young people travelling to and from meeting place.	Leaders, young people and their family's risk from shared transport, public transport or travelling in a group.	Ask parents/carers and young people to carefully plan transport arrangements. Consider location close to homes of young people.				
Transmission of Covid19 to vulnerable young people and their families	Some leaders, young people and their families are at greater risk if infected.	Offering opportunity for young people to receive support in another way. Ensuring parents and carers have given consent and aren't 'shielded'				
More than 6 people arriving at meeting place.	Leaders, young-people and their families. Increased transmission risk and breach of the legal guidelines.	Communicating with young person and parent/carer that guests cannot attend. Inviting young people individually.	Plan to end meeting early if numbers exceed 6.			
Young people leaving meeting early.	Safeguarding and transmission risk when under supervision of leaders.	Hold contact details of carer and agree to call them if any problems arise.				
Interaction with unknown and	Safeguarding and transmission risk if meeting in busy public space.	Choose location carefully and brief leaders of risks.				

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unchecked adults in public space						
Arriving to find planned location being used by others.	Transmission risk if having to move meeting location and safety risk if meeting is not in proscribed area.	Arrive at location early and check area. Plan communicating to carers and PCC if location needs to be moved.				
Location recently used by others and/or litter left.	As above	As above.				
Change to government guidelines and/or local infection rates	Higher transmission risk could be reported, and safety regulations change.	Check government website, local authority advice and National Youth Agency alert level shortly before meeting commences.	Notify carers of any changes.			
If meeting in private garden: Access.	Higher transmission risk if location is accessed through a property.	Open doors and check route so no contact is needed. Ensure distancing can be maintained.				
Allergic Reactions	Hay fever, grass allergies. Mild allergies can be mistaken for COVID symptoms and vice versa.	Communicating location of meeting to carers and obtaining consent, along with any medical concerns.				
Hand hygiene	Transmission risk through touching of surfaces and no toilet/washing facilities being available.	Limit shared surfaces as far as possible. No passing of materials. No refreshments provided.	Provide hand sanitiser and encourage thorough hand washing when participants return home.			
Attendees arriving with Covid19 symptoms	High transmission risk	Obtaining consent and contact details in advance. Checking with carers that young people do not display symptoms.	Leaders to check authorised symptom list and end meeting if these are displayed in any attendee.			
	Toilet facilities not available due to higher transmission risks.	Notify carers that no facilities will be available. Plan meeting as				

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Date of first risk assessment:

Date to be reviewed:

Time:

Location:

Name of leader with responsibility:

Young person needing to use a toilet.		close as possible to attendees homes or ensure carers can pick-up yp if needed.				
Other environment risks from outdoor meeting: sun burn, heat cold.	Risk to young people and leaders. Rain could tempt people to move indoors.	Check weather forecast beforehand.				
Injury and accident	Young people and leaders trips or falls	Check area beforehand clear or signpost any hazards	One leader with first aid training and first aid kit to-hand. Carer contact details to phone for medical advice.			