

# A Guide For Group Leaders

## Safeguarding Young People From Harm

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# Welcome to the YHA

This informative guide is intended for all visiting Group Leaders and staff. It outlines YHA's responsibilities towards safeguarding young people from harm and clarifies what we envisage from all groups during their stay.

YHA (England and Wales) Ltd wants children to enjoy their stay with us and feel encouraged to take an active part in promoting health, rest and education. We recognise that safeguarding children and young people is the responsibility of everyone, not just Group Leaders and parents who use Youth Hostels. <sup>(1)</sup>

We will do our utmost to ensure that children are protected from harm while they visit our hostels. We will do this by enforcing the following principles:

- All children and young people are entitled to be safe with us and may look up to staff as role models. Our approach is to employ and develop our people to the point that their behaviour is absolutely above reproach in this respect.
- Our staff are here to assist all Group Leaders. YHA staff are trained in, and capable of, handling emergency situations. A member of staff will be available during hostel opening hours and at night to help with emergencies. They will also help provide risk assessment information. It is important to emphasise that responsibility for the group has to rest with Group Leaders. YHA staff cannot act 'in loco parentis', but will always report inappropriate behaviour to Group Leaders for action.
- Every organisation should designate a person or persons to be responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of children.

<sup>1</sup> For YHA policy purposes, as in the Children Acts 1989 and 2004, a child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.

## **The YHA's child protection policy applies to:**

- Any situation involving children or young people, whether or not accompanied by adults;
- All staff, volunteers and other people working with the YHA, including contractors and consultants;
- People organising or taking part in events on behalf of YHA, or on YHA properties.

YHA's child protection policy and procedures includes the name of the designated person, his/her role and responsibilities and how he/she can be contacted. The person designated is knowledgeable about child protection and undertakes any training considered necessary to keep him/herself updated on new developments.

While primarily intended to safeguard children, YHA's child protection policy also serves to protect staff – and others working with us – from unsubstantiated allegations and improper conduct. It also serves to protect staff from misunderstanding.

YHA's child protection policy is available to Group Leaders to view at each hostel.

## What we offer

### YHA:

- Ensures that all available criminal record and related checks are made on staff, volunteers and contractors working in Youth Hostels and on staff and families resident in Youth Hostels who could have access to children;
- Supports members of YHA staff by providing child protection awareness training;
- Ensures that hostel staff are clearly identifiable to children by wearing staff ID badges;
- Ensures that hostel staff are trained in, and capable of, handling emergency situations;

### Good practice amongst colleagues:

We expect our staff and volunteers to:

- Support each other in their work with children and young people and encourage the use of these guidelines at all times;
- Be familiar with YHA child protection policy and procedures and report any cause for concern appropriately;
- Accept monitoring and assessment as part of the commitment of the YHA to safe and good practice;
- Discuss with colleagues their role, performance and any concerns they have about their work with children and young people in supervision;
- Be given a copy of the YHA code of behaviour and should be asked to sign a declaration that they have read it and agree with the content.

## **Screening of YHA Staff and Volunteers:**

All individuals working with/having regular contact with children will have an enhanced disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB).

We expect all third party catering, cleaning and security staff employed by contractors who have similar access to children as YHA employees, to be screened before commencement of work at a Youth Hostel. Child protection trained (designated) persons will be responsible for keeping this aspect of the procedures under review.

## **What Group Leaders need to do:**

Where possible, we recommend Group Leaders visit our hostels in advance, to meet the staff and discuss any issues well ahead of their stay.

We also recommend they view our Group Stay Risk Management Assessment. This document is intended to provide groups with details of our health and safety management arrangements. It has been written and designed around the Department for Education and Employment (DFEE) "Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits 'a good practice guidance' " and demonstrates our commitment to ensuring health and safety, as an accommodation and activity provider.

We expect all groups to have their own child protection procedures and that Group Leaders are familiar with this and will treat any concern expressed to them in accordance with those procedures.

Where a member of YHA staff or a volunteer has a concern about a child, this will be reported to the designated person for your group. Exceptions to this may be when the concern was about the behaviour of a member of your staff/adult accompanying your group. In these circumstances the YHA child protection procedures will be followed and the concerns may be reported to children's social care or the police.

Any concerns about a child are notified to the YHA designated person.

**Leader Ratios:** For school and youth groups there must be one adult leader of each sex if it is a mixed party, with ratios as follows (ref: DFEE) :

**4 - 6 years**            1 adult : 10-15 children  
(Up to the age of 8 years)

**7- onwards**            1 adult ; 15-20 children

Activities with all children and young people must be planned to involve at least two adults and or supervisors at least in sight of others. Group Leaders should assess the risks and consider the activities to be undertaken.

### **Group Leaders request to share a room:**

YHA have a very strict policy that Group Leaders do **not** share a room with young people. We will endeavour to work with groups/organisations where their own policy differs from the YHA approach. Where this is the case, a written request by a group/organisation will be required at the time of booking, prior to their stay.

# Minimising the Risk

On the basis that “prevention is better than cure”, we recommend the following best practice:

- Ensure familiarity with the YHA guidance on ‘Safeguarding Children and Young People from Harm’.
- Avoid situations in which staff are alone with children. If necessary, move to a place where both can be seen and heard by colleagues.
- Respect a young person’s right to privacy.
- Ensure separate sleeping accommodation for Group Leaders and young people.
- Comfort and reassure young people should they be hurt or distressed, without compromising their dignity or doing anything to discredit one’s own behaviour.
- Provide access for young people to talk about concerns they may have.
- Avoid situations that compromise relationships and positions of trust (e.g. any physical contact or behaviour).
- Provide an example others will wish to follow.

## **Do Not:**

- Permit abusive peer activities (e.g. ridiculing, bullying).
- Have any inappropriate physical or verbal contact with young people.
- Jump to conclusions about unsubstantiated allegations.
- Make suggestive remarks or gestures, even in fun.
- Let suspicion, disclosure or allegation of abuse go unrecorded or unreported to the designated person.
- Make assumptions or speculate.
- Make promises that cannot be kept.
- Agree to keep the information secret.

# Protecting children from hazards or rash behaviour

We recognise that it is impossible to ensure that no child ever comes to harm on YHA property. What YHA collectively, and Group Leaders must do, is take all reasonable steps to protect children from likely risks arising from the nature or condition of particular sites or events.

Children are naturally adventurous, and the YHA exists partly to provide new opportunities. This means that we must try to anticipate adventurous behaviour and assess the risks involved. We all have a duty to prevent young people from coming to harm through their rash actions. However, concerns regarding the behaviour of children/young people will always be referred to the Group Leader to be addressed.

We must all take reasonable steps to ensure that no other member of staff, volunteer or member of the public/customer compromises the health and safety of any child in contact with the YHA.

## **Addressing Concerns:**

We recognise that it is important for us all to feel confident that any information about alleged or actual child abuse will only be disclosed where it is in the best interest of the child to do so. Furthermore, we have a responsibility to protect the identity of anyone reporting suspected or actual abuse. No such disclosure will be made without careful consultation with the YHA designated person. Gaining approval for disclosure will not delay the consultative and referral process.

It is not the YHA's responsibility to investigate a situation other than issues relating to internal failings in the health and safety management procedures but to refer concerns on to local children's social care departments or the police.

**In case of accidents:** we expect that Group Leaders/Hostel staff will go to the scene immediately and/or summon First Aid assistance and/or contact emergency services. A trained First Aider or Appointed Person only should give treatment.

**YHA and Technology:** It is recognised that there are possible risks posed to children through new technology such as the internet, digital cameras and text messaging. All Hostel Staff will be vigilant and any concerns will be reported to the YHA Designated Person. The YHA will ensure, so far as is practicable, that access to any web sites or material which the supplier deems unacceptable or which may be prohibited by statutes, regulations or directives, cannot be obtained by any person using the terminals within the site.

## **Contact Details**

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