

Chapter 12: Guidance for the safeguarding of children and young people from other countries on short-term visits

Aim of the chapter

Children from other countries may visit our church for a variety of reasons, for example:

- As part of a charity holiday
- As part of a choir/performing mission
- As part of mission teams

The most common form of short-term visits is through mission choir/performance, usually a series of events. In these situations, children usually travel without family members and with a team of charity personnel.

This guidance addresses that scenario.

Key Terms

1. **Tour Leader** – the person in charge of the whole trip representing the charity
2. **Charity leaders/mentors/chaperones** – adult individuals employed/volunteering through the charity (these should be mainly adult leaders, see below)
3. **Hosting church** – the church through which the partnership is set up and is accommodating the children and charity leaders while they are performing in the local area. There could be several hosting churches during the whole trip
4. **Hosts/hosting families** – the individual homes in which children and charity leaders will reside between events
5. **Designated Person (hosting church)** – retains safeguarding oversight of all children associated with the church, even short term
6. **Venue church** – the church responsible for the one-off performance/event with the charity and the children involved

Person in charge of the tour and charity leaders/mentors/chaperones

Under 18 years old

- Some of the volunteers or leaders travelling with the children will be under 18 years old – children in terms of our legislation
- These leaders should be a minimum and hosting churches should seek assurances prior to the trip commencing that the majority of charity leaders are adults
- No 'leader' can be under the age of 16; anyone who is with the group under the age of 16 is counted as one of the child participants
- The 16- and 17-year-old leaders should be accompanied by an adult leader for the purposes of the accommodation

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- 16- and 17-year-olds who are holding the responsibility of being a leader cannot share bedrooms with the children

A. Adult Leaders

- Prior to the trip commencing, the hosting church should get assurances that the charity has recruited and vetted, to the best of its ability, all adults involved in the trip
- Leaders from the home region may not be able to access vetting processes and criminal record checks in their country and the charity should give assurances that the individuals have been checked to the best of their ability through other measures (interview/references etc.)

B. Local Charity Leaders

- At times, the charity will employ individuals from Ireland or Northern Ireland who work for it and have not travelled with the group from their own country
- Any leader partnering with the charity from this country should have a valid vetting record check (AccessNI or NVB Vetting, ROI)
- The charity remains responsible for those local leaders for recruiting, vetting and training

It is important to note that the children in the local hosting families must also be protected from any person of risk, including those adults visiting briefly and staying in their home – therefore, vetting processes need to be open and honestly shared with the hosting church.

Please remember at all times that the standard of safeguarding that applies is that which is expected in Northern Ireland/Ireland, not that of the region from which the children have travelled, unless this is assessed as being over and above our own safeguarding standards.

Principles of good practice relating to events

A. Changing facilities, bathroom, refreshments and space

This relates to any venue that is being used. It is acknowledged that sometimes facilities on church premises can be limited.

It is a legal requirement that children over the age of five have separate boys' and girls' changing rooms and that adults also change separately. In the event that only one changing room is available, the children must change in turn (e.g. boys change, then girls).

Children should not be left in the changing rooms alone and should not leave the changing rooms unsupervised. This is the responsibility of the charity leaders.

Children should have access to bathroom facilities at all times. Churches should ensure that their bathrooms are clean and stocked; female bathrooms should provide access to sanitary products.

The hosting church must ensure they have provided adequate refreshments for children throughout their evening.

Children should have access to a safe space in order to play and move around while they are waiting for a performance, or for somewhere to go if they feel unwell at any point.

All such areas need to be easily accessible and should be near to where the wider events are taking place – for example, children should not be isolated or alone with only one adult in a separate building if they have become unwell and need to return to the children's space.

B. Staging and performance risk assessment

Before every performance, a visual risk assessment should be made of the stage area to ensure that it is suitable.

A clear entry/exit point to and from the stage should be discussed and agreed in advance.

Adequate lighting should be in place and care taken that there are no obstacles that could cause accidents.

C. Performances

The itinerary for the events is the responsibility of the charity. It should be shared in advance of the trip with the hosting church partners.

Children in Performance Regulations NI

In Northern Ireland, children participating in performances must adhere to specific regulations to ensure their safety and well-being. The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 and the Children (Public Performances) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996 govern these regulations. These regulations apply to performances in licensed premises, broadcasts and recordings intended for public exhibition and may include churches and other church premises or facilities.

Children are defined as individuals not over school-leaving age, and they must be accompanied by a parent or a registered chaperone at all times during rehearsal and performance. The Education Authority (EA) is responsible for issuing performance licences for children and ensuring that safeguarding responsibilities are met.

The EA advises on the application process for licences and exemptions, and it is crucial for churches to seek advice and guidance and where necessary to submit applications for licences or exemptions at least 30 days before the first performance. Early discussion should be had with the charity responsible for the event as some countries will have similar regulations and may want to issue requirements in the home county.

See: www.eani.org.uk/services/other-services/children-in-employment-and-entertainment

For more detailed information on the application process and requirements, individuals can refer to the official guidelines provided by the EA and the Children in Entertainment and Employment Team (CEET).

If the hosting church has any concerns about the itinerary this should be addressed prior to the trip commencing.

The itinerary should demonstrate time and space on arrival in this country for children to adjust and recover from the journey.

Children should be substituted in performances and events when they are sick, tired or sore/injured.

When a child is uncomfortable or showing signs of distress on stage, they should be removed from the stage and effort made to find out what the issue is.

The child should only return if the issue has been resolved, and the child is comfortable and ready to.

Children should never be put under pressure/forced to perform, including if they want to pull out at the last moment.

It is essential that back-to-back performances do not occur, and that there is significant rest between events.

Late nights should always be followed by a period of rest the following day and churches should not arrange for activities the following morning.

D. Re-traumatisation

It is **never acceptable** that any child or young person is in a position in which they are asked to re-tell any traumatic events in a public arena.

Performances should not include the conveying of sensitive, distressing or traumatic information.

This is not an acceptable manner in which to demonstrate the work of a charity and it places children and young people at significant risk of harm.

Travel related

Child safety in hosts' cars / bus transport

Travel remains the responsibility of the sending charity.

However, at times, a local church will provide transport if a group is performing over several nights.

In that case, travel to and from the church is usually managed by either hosting church members or by a church bus/church-hired bus.

- Adequate insurance must be in place, and the driver a fully qualified individual with a valid driving licence
- Adults must ensure that children have used their seat belts
- Adults must ensure that booster seats are used in line with legislation if necessary
- Adults must ensure that children are advised how to behave appropriately while journeying so as to avoid sudden distraction to the driver

Apparel

- Children from other countries can often find adjusting to the weather and climate stressful
- It is important that consideration has been given to appropriate clothing and children should be listened to if they are expressing that they are feeling too cold
- Appropriate outerwear must be provided if the weather requires it; this is the responsibility of the charity and the hosting church should help if required, ensuring that every child has appropriate clothing

Good practices hosting children

At times, a church will provide accommodation to children during the time they are performing in an area; often this will be in individual church members' own homes.

At all times children must remain in pairs and be with at least one of the charity's adult leaders/ mentors. Hosts will therefore be hosting a minimum of three individuals.

Identifying host homes

- This should be planned well in advance
- Potential hosts should be recruited and vetted in the same manner as any other volunteer or leader of children's activities in the congregation
- This includes all adults who live in the house and any other child over the age of 16
- Hosts are responsible for those who may visit their home during the time the children are staying with them

Sleeping arrangements

- Children should have their own room for sleeping and resting. It is appropriate for the children to share the room as long as the children are not expressing any issues with this

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- The room should have a single access point
- Charity leaders should have a separate room
- Children need to be shown where the charity leader is, and how to get their attention if required
- Children need to sleep on appropriate mattresses; sofas or cushions on a floor are not acceptable
- Children should have access to a night light if they want this
- Hosts should not access the room while the children are resting – any issues should be managed by the charity leader
- Children's belongings are private and hosts should not interfere with them; they should be stored safely for the children while they are out and about

Bathing arrangements

- Children should wash /bath themselves
- Hosting homes should ensure safe water temperatures
- Charity leaders should ensure the child has everything they need before commencing
- In the case where a leader needs to assist, the door must be left open and the host made aware

Soiled bed clothes

- This is mainly the responsibility of the leader from the charity to manage and support the child
- Children should be supported in a reassuring and sensitive manner and as few people as possible need to be advised of any accidents
- Hosts should ensure that the leader is able to access fresh linen and be able to dispose of or launder soiled linen

High-risk games and play (e.g. trampolines, biking, swimming, going to other locations)

- All higher-risk social activities should be monitored by the charity leader present in the host's home
- Children should not be allowed to leave the hosts home unaccompanied
- They should not be allowed to visit other homes (e.g. the friends of children residing in the household) or go to other family members' houses without the charity leader also present with the children at all times

Food and fluid

- Hosts should be given a written document regarding any food allergies or intolerances or any other dietary requirements of the child

- If a child requires any adjustments in their diet due to a medical condition (e.g. diabetes) the host should be made aware. The management of medical issues remains the responsibility of the charity leader
- Hosts should be given guidance in understanding the usual diet of the children in their care; it may be that high salt or sugar foods are not usually available to that child and could make them unwell
- Hosts should be given understanding of any cultural requirements around meal and snack times for the child
- Hosts should ensure that the child has access to water to drink at all times
- Hosts should be made aware of any food a child in their care does not like, to ensure that the child is not embarrassed or feeling under pressure to eat something they find distasteful

Medical and health

Serious medical issues (Emergency)

- In an emergency, contact 999 or take the injured child to nearest Hospital Emergency Dept
- All incidents are to be reported to the Tour Leader immediately
- Children should not be separated from their charity leader; therefore, consideration needs to be given to any child who requires emergency treatment and any child who is being left in the host's home during this time. Hosts should therefore be able to contact the Tour Leader for emergency support; this arrangement should not cause delay to treatment

Minor medical issues/administration of medication /reporting of any medical concerns/incidents

- All accidents or incidents should have a written report associated, clearly outlining the issue and the actions taken, including the follow-up required and when next of kin (usually not in the country) have been advised
- Copies of accident reports should be held by the Tour Leader and the Designated Person of the local hosting church
- Charity leaders should be appraised of any medical conditions or allergies and they will therefore lead with the medical team enquiries when accessing any medical care
- Hosts are responsible for ensuring swift access to medical care as required
- Charity leaders are responsible for the safe storage and administration of any medication the child is on
- Hosts should not give the child any medication or home remedy
- Hosts should ensure that their own medications are out of sight and reach of all children

Communication

Social media

- The church in which the children are performing need to make a clear statement, before the performance commences, regarding any images being captured by members of the public.
This statement needs to be in line with the charity's own policy and procedures
- The charity should have clear guidelines on the use of social media and the charity is responsible for ensuring the parental consent for this
- Individual hosts should not put images of children in their care on social media; children are on their down time when with hosts and not practising or performing. This is their private space and time

Use of phones, tablets and computers

- The Tour Leader is responsible for making clear to the hosting churches and families their rules and regulations in allowing the children to have access to the internet
- Hosting families should remember that contact with home could be upsetting for children and the Tour Leader will have planned for this contact and support thereafter
- If the church or hosting families have any concerns that a child is either not getting contact from family or community at home, or has been seeking this out and is being ignored, they should speak directly to the Tour Leader and get assurances that this will be accommodated appropriately
- At no point should children be allowed to engage in online or offline gaming, without the express permission of the Tour Leader. Some games are potentially traumatising
- At no point should children be encouraged to share their details or have suggested further contact with anyone they meet while on tour (see below)
- This should be managed age appropriately by the charity; small children need different parameters from teenagers and young people with regard to social media and phones. The charity must advise hosting churches of their expectations

Ongoing communication with children after the event

- It is not appropriate for hosts to keep in contact with individual children they have met through this experience outside of the parameters set up by the charity's own regulations
- The hosting church should ensure that it has received a pack including all of the charity's policies, guidance and expectations prior to the children arriving
- The hosting church leadership should ensure that all hosts have had access to this and are clear about the guidance

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- All ongoing contact should be open, transparent and set up through the charity's safe systems (for example, if there is ongoing sponsorship of a child there will be a safe process for this)

Gifts

- Host families and churches should only accept small gifts from children, for example, art work or crafts they have made
- Host families and churches should only give small gifts to children. Consideration should be given to:
 - fairness across the whole group
 - restrictions on what can be allowed through customs and checks (e.g. food stuffs or liquids are not usually a good idea)
 - the meaning of the gift to the child/children
- All gifts given to children should be declared to the charity leader; this ensures openness and transparency and no later confusion or delays when travelling
- Money should never be given as a gift
- Host churches and families should consider meaningful gifts, like a disposable camera for the duration of their stay and printing out the pictures the child has taken for the child to keep

Managing safeguarding

General arrangements

- The Designated Person of the church should be aware in advance that the church is hosting the group
- The details of the Designated Person/s should be given to the Tour Leader and the charity leaders
- The children should meet the Designated Person and be advised who he/she is and what their role is, in a child-friendly manner
- The Designated Person should have a list of the hosts in advance, including their dates of recruitment, vetting and training
- The Designated Person should raise immediately with Kirk Session of any hosting church if they have any concerns about the arrangements
- The Designated Person must be advised of and involved in any child safeguarding matter
- The charity should provide the church with a copy of its safeguarding policy and procedures prior to the trip. If there are any concerns about the procedures these discussions and clarifications should take place between the hosting church and the charity prior to the trip commencing. The church should be assured that the safeguarding arrangements of the charity with which they are partnering are robust

Dealing with concerns

- Any safeguarding concern must be assessed and managed in the same manner in which we would respond for any child within our own congregations or attending our ministries
- Factual and clear record keeping must be in place, clearly outlining the concern and the actions taken
- The Tour Leader should be kept involved at all times and is responsible for the charity's actions and records
- Always, the immediate safety of children comes first, the welfare of the child is paramount in all decision-making
- If a disclosure is made with regard to a situation occurring in the child's home region the Tour Leader should be involved and should outline to the Designated Person how this will be managed.
The Designated Person has a responsibility to alert our local social services who will also assess the situation and seek assurances as to the charity's protocols

Safeguarding checklist

Before arrival
Received and reviewed the itinerary
Received and reviewed the charity's policy and procedure pack
Received a list of leaders, identifying how many are 16- and 17-year-olds
Received care plans for individual children (e.g. dietary and medical conditions etc.)
Planning of ratios for hosting family accommodation, ensuring that any issues with available charity leaders/mentors/chaperones are addressed in advance of the trip
Recruit, vet and train all potential hosting families
Advise Designated Personnel in hosting churches of the trip and agenda
Contacted the EA CEET team to ascertain if a performance licence needs to be applied for any performances and any requirements arising from that

	During hosting
	Ensure that children meet the Designated Person for the church that is hosting
	Ensure that details have been shared between charity leader, hosts and the tour leader so that communication out of hours can be maintained in an emergency

CHAPTER END

