

Day Venues

Guidance

Day Venues

Youth work organisations use a range of different venues for delivering their services. The venue itself is a key part of the overall safety management system so advance planning is required. When using day activity venues that are not owned or managed by the youth work organisation, workers should ensure that procedures are in place to manage the safety and wellbeing of young people and workers at the venue. The need for this is even greater in settings that are not specifically designed for young people or are open to the public such as hotels or hostels. An induction should be arranged to familiarise the activity leader with the venue and share relevant safety information, for example where the fire exits and fire extinguishers are located.

Where the venue is owned or managed directly by the youth work organisation, effective policies and procedures should be upheld. If the site is shared with other activities that are not directly related to youth work delivery, additional policies, procedures and risk assessments should be applied.

Before booking venues with any external provider, organisations should undertake a check and assessment of the provider or venue to help assess that appropriate safety standards are in place (see *Third party providers* for further information). A preliminary visit to new venues (or ones that have undergone changes since they were last used) will normally help identify the more significant health and safety considerations and inform the risk assessment process. Checks could also be made to confirm that the venue or provider holds any external accreditations relevant to their provision (see *Accreditation schemes* for further details).

On arrival at any venue, workers should carry out a basic visual inspection of the facilities to observe the general state of the site, rooms and/or building fabric, any equipment provided; and to ensure emergency exits are clearly marked and accessible. Workers should try to meet with venue staff upon arrival to check whether there has been any changes or health and safety matters they need to know during the day. If necessary, workers should implement additional control measures to help ensure group safety. If workers are concerned and are not confident that all risks can be managed effectively on the day, plans for the day should be changed.

It is always good practice to ensure that all young people and workers are informed of pertinent safety information in relation to the venue/site. A basic safety briefing (See *Safety briefings* for further information) should be provided on arrival and should cover key aspects such as:

- A description of key locations, possibly as a tour of the site in more complex locations
- Fire safety and evacuation procedures (see below)
- First aid points
- Security and other site users
- Key hazards
- Expected standards of behaviour
- Where to find and how to contact staff
- Washing and toilet facilities and an explanation of any safeguarding measures in place

Fire safety

Although fire is normally of greater concern during the use of residential venues, fire safety should remain a primary concern when booking and using day activity venues. The Fire safety resource provides more information and some good practice that can be applied to day venues.

Safeguarding: access to toilets and washing facilities

Arrangements for managing the use of shared facilities should be considered in advance at day venues. Where possible, single gender facilities should be used, and staff should use separate facilities to young people. Facilities should be lockable and secure and provide a private space. Where possible, facilities should not be accessible by other users of the site or the public. Cubicles must be secure enough that children feel safe but care must be taken not to inadvertently provide a locked room that could be used for sexual activity, (whether consensual or abusive), bullying, substance abuse, misuse or distribution or any other illegal or anti-social activity.

Where this is not possible, staff should consider appropriate, reasonable and practical control measures to safeguard all group members, e.g. allocate specific washing/showering times for separate groups/genders, young people and staff.

Use of private settings

To keep young people safe and to safeguard the relationships they have with key adults, it is prohibited for private settings such as workers, volunteers or young people's homes and gardens to be used for youth work/sector group activities. The following outlines some (not exhaustive) of the reasons this directive is adhered to:

It is vital to maintain professional boundaries between practitioner (workers and volunteers) and young people. This is to safeguard both young people and practitioners from risks of allegations on inappropriate behaviour. There are many very public incidences where the boundaries have been blurred and this creates an unacceptable reputational risk for youth sector organisations and practitioners.

There are safeguarding concerns and implications associated with young people attending the private homes of workers. A practitioner's home or garden is a private domain that must remain separate from any interaction with a young person they work with in a professional or voluntary capacity. Maintaining professional boundaries is not only important for individual professionals and service users, it also protects organisations and the integrity of the services they provide. Furthermore, safeguarding principles, supervision ratios and code of conduct are called into question when using private homes, putting workers and young people in an unnecessary vulnerable position.

Health and safety is harder to assess and manage effectively in a domestic setting (where normal health and safety at work rules don't apply). Furthermore, standard domestic home insurance will not cover 'commercial activity from the home' unless specified, and public liability insurance would be required to cover the activity. Use of private land granted by a landowner for trekking, camping or similar activities could be considered but the youth work organisation would need to conduct due diligence in a similar way to other third-party providers.

If the regular venue you use is not available and you would like to continue to provide services or activities for young people, if appropriate, consider using a third-party venue following the guidance summarised in this document. If using a third-party venue is not appropriate consider, using a public space, review the public spaces and outreach work guidance to help you consider and manage potential risks.