



# Youth Ministry - Safe to take risks

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# Adolescent Development

- Test limits:  
move from dependence towards independence
- Taking risks:  
not automatically “poor behaviour”  
learn judgement, build confidence, and discover capabilities
- Brain development:  
reward-seeking and sensitivity to peer influence increase  
skills involved in pausing, planning ahead, and weighing longer-term consequences are still maturing.



# Children's Ministry vs Youth Ministry

Children's Ministry:  
primary aim is to keep  
children safe.

Youth Ministry:  
primary aim to help young  
people keep themselves safe.

Key Principle of youth ministry is *empowerment*:

support young people to grow in agency, voice, and responsibility.

help develop the awareness, skills, and confidence to safeguard themselves (and to seek help early).

does not reduce our duty of care—but changes what “good safeguarding” is trying to achieve.

How does this affect your approach to ministry?



# Principle of Lowest Reasonable Risk -1

## Start with the purpose:

What developmental or discipleship benefit does this activity offer that can't be gained in a "no risk" alternative?

## Name the real risks (not just the imagined ones):

What are the specific, likely harms (and to whom), rather than a general sense that it feels risky?

## Check proportionality:

Are the controls (ratios, venue checks, transport plan, permissions) matched to the level of risk, or driven by worst-case thinking?



# Principle of Lowest Reasonable Risk -2

## Strengthen supervision and boundaries:

Who is accountable, what are the roles, and what clear behaviour and communication expectations are in place?

## Listen to youth leaders' expertise:

Ask what they have done before, what went well/poorly, and what they need from safeguarding to run it well.

## Plan for "when", not "if", something happens:

What is the response plan for illness, injury, a disclosure, missing young person, or a safeguarding concern?



# Common Risk Anxieties

## Practices & Activities

1-1 mentoring / pastoral support

Transporting young people

Residentials

## Relationships

Peer to Peer relationships

LGBTQ+ Young People

Young Leaders



# Case Studies

**Purpose:** What growth/discipleship outcome are we aiming for?

**Young people's voice:** What do young people need/want here, and what are they ready for?

**Real risks:** What specific harms are reasonably foreseeable (likelihood/impact)?

**Safeguards:** What controls make this wise (supervision, boundaries, environment, comms, consent, training)?

**Empowerment:** What helps young people safeguard themselves in this scenario (help-seeking, consent, bystander skills, digital boundaries)?

**Decision:** What are we saying "yes" to? What are the conditions? Who signs it off? What gets recorded?

**If something goes wrong:** What is the response plan and who is responsible?

Questions & Feedback  
What are you taking away?  
What next...?

