

The current season of lockdown has inevitably changed the way we do things. For people who are used to face to face ministry, it is very strange.

The activities which revolved around gathering have disappeared. The known has become the unknown.





For some, this season has released renewed creativity. But for others it has engendered a sense of wondering what their role might be now, or inadequacy as they feel they cannot live up to the activity of others. Children and Youth Leaders need encouragement to reframe their roles so that they can continue to support, encourage and accompany the younger members of our congregations in this time. In this, we need to be realistic in our expectations.

Home may not have the same access to resources as the church office. Leaders cannot assume that repeated screen meetings work well if home access to the internet is poor, and of course, if they ARE having screen meetings, check that they are always following good safeguarding practices.

The parish may need to consider if there is additional technical or practical support that needs to be given so that they are adequately equipped for the role.

Some leaders may be going through additional difficulties of their own. If they are away from family and friends, they may feel additionally isolated or anxious about those they are not near. There may also be a concern about ongoing employment. Check that they have someone with whom they can be honest about their feelings and concerns.

As the time comes when restrictions begin to be lifted, work with your leader(s) as to how to reframe the next season. Think together about what reframing may need to happen, based on the experiences of lockdown. This may be a time to try something new.

## Ideas that might help

- Have a regular check in by phone or screen. Children and youth leaders need to know they are not forgotten. Remember to ask about family and friends, and not just about work.
- Ensure leaders are linked with the Diocesan Children or Youth Adviser who may be able to provide additional support and links to a wider community of employed Children and Youth leaders.
- Signpost any links or ideas you may receive from other sources – but be careful not to make leaders feel that they must over-perform or replicate what others are doing.
- Ask church members to pray regularly for individual leaders.
- Send a card, pop a box of sweets or biscuits on their doorstep, leave a home baked cake or meal for them – small gestures can help in isolation.
- Suggest that this might be a good time to do some reading and thinking around the practice, theory and theology of children and youth work.
- Check what support your Diocese offers regarding mental health and wellbeing in case your employee has need of it.

## Additional resources

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**The Church of England's Safeguarding Team** have issued an advice note on using online conferencing with young people.

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**Youthscape** has a number of theological reflections on youthwork in the pandemic.

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**Youth for Christ** has a number of online youthwork sessions.

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**Youthwork Support UK** has brought together a number of links and resources around community youthwork.

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**CURBS** has stories and resources to support ministry with children in urban situations.

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**Messy Church at Home** has a number of sessions to help stay in touch with families during lockdown.

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**Source URL:** <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/faith-home/i-am-church-leader/supporting-children-and-youth-leaders>