

How to...

Run a children's Holiday Club

The aim of this guide is to help you think through the why/when/what and how of running a successful holiday club as part of your church. It may be helpful to work through the headings below as a planning group, so that your vision for doing this is clear and shared by those involved. As with setting up any new ministry in a church, we recommend that you spend a focused period of time in prayer, so that God can speak into your plans.

Holiday Clubs or Holiday Activity Days can be a great way to connect with children but before you dive in, here are a few questions to think through:

- Why do you want to run a holiday club?
- When will you run it and for how long?
- Where would be a good venue for the holiday club?
- What kinds of things do you want to include in the programme?
- How will you gather a team?
- How much will the holiday club cost to run?
- How will you tell children and their families about the holiday club?
- How could you make sure the whole church feels involved?
- When the holiday club is over what might be the next step?

Why do you want to run a holiday club?

This is a really good place to start, as although we might all agree this is a great fun way of connecting with children and their families, it's important you agree on some aims in your own context. Reasons for running a holiday club could include:

- Creating an opportunity for the church to reach out to local children and their families.
- Provision of fun activities for children during the long school holidays.
- A lack of low cost activities for children in your area.
- You have few children involved in your church but would love that to change.
- You have a good link with your local Primary School and this could be the next step.
- You have a thriving children's group and church parents are keen for something extra in school holidays where children can invite their friends.
- You remember attending a holiday club as a child and it had a big impact on you!

Having discussed your primary reasons for running a holiday club, now turn these into your aims. We suggest 3 or 4 main aims that reflect the missional and practical elements of what you hope to do. They can also include who the club is aimed at (i.e. is it aimed at children from church families who you already know or at those you have yet to connect with, or both).

When will you run it and for how long?

Holiday clubs are often run during the summer holidays but can equally work well at Easter or in the February, May or October half term holidays. This is worth thinking through in terms of other events happening in the life of your church, as well as in your wider community.

Many church holiday clubs have traditionally been run over 5 morning or afternoon sessions plus an all-age Sunday service that the whole family are invited to. However, some churches have found that running a longer day works better with working parents and so have opted for 3 longer days (with children bringing a packed lunch), concluding the week with a tea or BBQ on the final afternoon that families are invited along to. Others have gone for a single day event that involves the whole family.

Think about what will work best for the families you hope to include. It would be worth asking some parents if they're not already represented in your team. Much will also depend on the team you have available.

Note about Ofsted: In England, childcare involving under-8s that occurs more than 5 times in a year and lasts longer than 2 hours each day usually requires registration with Ofsted but most church-run holiday clubs are not required to register.

Where would be a good venue for the holiday club?

Key to any event is a good venue. Do you have church premises that will be available, accessible and suitable for the club you hope to run? Will there be enough space inside? Do you need outdoor space? Are there adequate toilet and hand washing facilities?

As an alternative to a church building is there a community building that you could use, such as a school or village hall? This may bring benefits in terms of facilities and accessibility as well as being somewhere children and their families are familiar with.

It will be important to produce Risk Assessments for the spaces you are using and the activities you will do in them. This does not need to be a daunting prospect but simply about thinking through potential hazards and how best to limit the risk of harm to those present.

What kinds of things do you want to include in the programme?

Putting together a programme for a holiday club can seem like an impossible job, but there are a number of organisations who produce holiday club resources which you can adapt for your own context. Scripture Union and John Hardwick are well known for their 'ready-to-use' Bible-based programmes. Typically these have an overall theme linking to a Bible story and include ideas for games, illustrations, story-telling, drama, songs and craft activities as well as helpful material for preparing your team. Resources like these are usually aimed at 5-11 year olds (Primary School age) but some include options for older or younger children, as well as considerations for children from different faith backgrounds and for those with additional needs. Depending on numbers or your context you may choose to narrow or widen the age range of your club and tailor your programme to suit this.

For help and advice finding resources and planning a programme, contact your Go Team Adviser. We have a number of tried and tested resources available to borrow.

How will you gather a team?

Gathering a team for your holiday club can often be a challenge if volunteers seem few, but it is essential to have the right team in place. Things to think about should include:

- **Safer recruiting:** All volunteers working with children in a holiday club setting are subject to the church's Safer Recruiting policy which should include an application process, the relevant DBS check and basic level Safeguarding training (C1). For more information speak to your Parish Safeguarding Officer or the Diocese Safeguarding team <https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/diocese/safeguarding/safeguarding-team/>
- **Roles & responsibilities:** There are a number of roles and responsibilities within a holiday club team and whilst some of these can be doubled up in a smaller club, it is helpful to share them out if you can. Roles could include: Programme/Activity Leader(s), Team Leaders/Helpers (working alongside the children), Welcomers/Registration, Storytellers, Music Leader/Band, PA/AV Tech, Craft Coordinator, Refreshments Team, Safeguarding Lead, First Aiders. Some roles need to be undertaken by more experienced leaders, but it can also be a good way to use the gifts of those not usually involved in children's ministry, including young people who are too old for the club itself.
- **Ratios:** The recommended staffing ratio for children 4-8 years is 1 adult to 6 children and for children 9-12 years is 1 adult to 8 children. In certain situations it will be necessary to have a higher number of adults, for instance when children have additional support needs. If young people are part of your team, remember to count these in the number of children present if they are under 18.
- **Planning & preparation:** involving as many of the team as possible in planning and preparation can be a really good way of sharing the vision, as well as the ownership of the club. Whilst there might be those who can only help on the day or for part of the week, do still let them know what's happening and what to expect.
- **Training:** all those working with children should have undertaken Basic Safeguarding Training (C1) and those leading children's activities should have completed Leadership Safeguarding Training (C2). In addition, it may be helpful to lead a short session on good and safe practice with children as part of your team preparation.

How much will the holiday club cost to run?

Costs will have to be considered at some stage, especially if you are hiring a building or equipment for the club. It may be that the church has already set aside funds for a project like this. If not, you will need to consider a funding strategy. A decision will also need to be made about whether to charge families for the club or not, and if so how much?

How will you tell children and their families about the holiday club?

Advertising the holiday club may seem simple in terms of putting up posters in shops and noticeboards, an ad in the parish magazine, school newsletter or Facebook page, or perhaps producing flyers for the local school to send home; but it's worth thinking through what you want to communicate and what might connect with the families and children you hope to

include. In some communities word of mouth still plays a big part in – a personal invitation goes a long way.

Note about registration: No child can be admitted to a holiday club without a consent form signed by a parent or adult with parental responsibility. Asking parents to pre-register for the club helps make sure this isn't an issue on the day and also identifies numbers and any allergies or special support needs a child might have.

How could you make sure the whole church feels involved?

As your team prepares for the club make sure you give regular updates to the wider church family, so they're aware of what's going on. Suggest ways they could be involved such as:

- Having enough invites so that church members can invite neighbours who have children.
- Inviting individuals to support the club with a financial gift.
- Involving church members in preparing craft activities or making cake for the team.
- Making a 'Prayer Card' so that all church members can pray specifically for the club.

When the holiday club is over what might be the next step?

As you plan the event it is worth thinking through what a follow on to the club might be. Perhaps another holiday club the same time next year or maybe a regular service or activity for children and families in your church or community.

Useful links:

Scripture Union resources <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/holiday-clubs-0>

John Hardwick resources <https://www.johnhardwick.org/holiday-clubs>

Messy Church holiday club ideas <https://www.messychurch.org.uk/tags/holiday-club>

Top Tips on Running Holiday Clubs (free to download from Scripture Union website)

Other relevant How To Guides: (available at www.bathandwells.org.uk)

How to set up children's / children and families ministry in your church

How to welcome and include those with additional needs

For any further advice or help, contact your Archdeaconry based Go Team Adviser:

<https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/ministry/children-young-people/>