**Observations guidance for potential new volunteers**

**in a youth / children’s group**

**Definition of observation**:

In this context ‘Observation’ means taking a good look at something, noticing facts and being informed. It is more than just a quick glance but less than a regular commitment.

Question:

Is it possible for a potential volunteer (known in the church) to visit a youth / children’s group to observe for one or two sessions before committing to volunteering or filling in the paperwork?

Example:

*Someone known in the church has been approached about becoming a volunteer on the youth team. The church runs a Friday evening open youth club for young people not connected with the church and a Sunday morning discipleship group for children of church members. This person is unsure if they are the right person to work with teenagers and ask to observe the youth groups before making a commitment.*

Guidelines:

* Observations are not on-going, they are one off situations that do not sidestep following full safe recruitment procedures for new volunteers or paid staff
* It must be made clear that whilst observing, the observer has no responsibility or specific duties, they are just observing
* Before any observations take place the Safeguarding person in the parish must be informed
* If the church has only one type of group, only one observation is necessary
* If the church runs two different types of youth / children’s group reaching different clientele, it may be appropriate to observe both groups in order to give a clearer picture of what the observer might be committing themselves to
* The observer should not attend more than two sessions
* The other volunteers and the children / young people should be given prior warning of the observation and the observer should be introduced at the session/s
* The group leader must ensure there are enough staff to cover the session allowing for someone (ideally the group leader) to be present with the observer at all times
* Encourage the observer to ask questions to the other staff members / volunteers, they may also ask questions of the children / young people
* Before an observation can take place the observer must complete a self-declaration form as this will validate insurance and follow the first part of the safe recruitment process

Outcome 1:

*After the observation the observer realises it is not for them and decline the invitation of becoming a member of the youth team.* No further steps of safe recruitment required*.*

Outcome 2:

*After the observation the observer agrees to become part of the youth team.* They must follow the full safe recruitment procedure under the guidance of the appointed safeguarding person in the parish and the Parochial Church Council before starting work as a volunteer.