



**Training Manual
for
Parent and Toddler
Group Leaders**

Adult and Family Ministries

...introducing people to Jesus



**United Kingdom Territory
with the Republic of Ireland**

Written by
Maureen Ross
Divisional Family Officer
London South-East Division

Acknowledgements to:
Lieut-Colonel Gillian Cotterill
Major Karen Ramsay
Verna Smith
Elisabet Lyne
Major Lorna Smith

Produced by
The Salvation Army
Adult and Family Ministries
101 Newington Causeway
London SE1 6BN

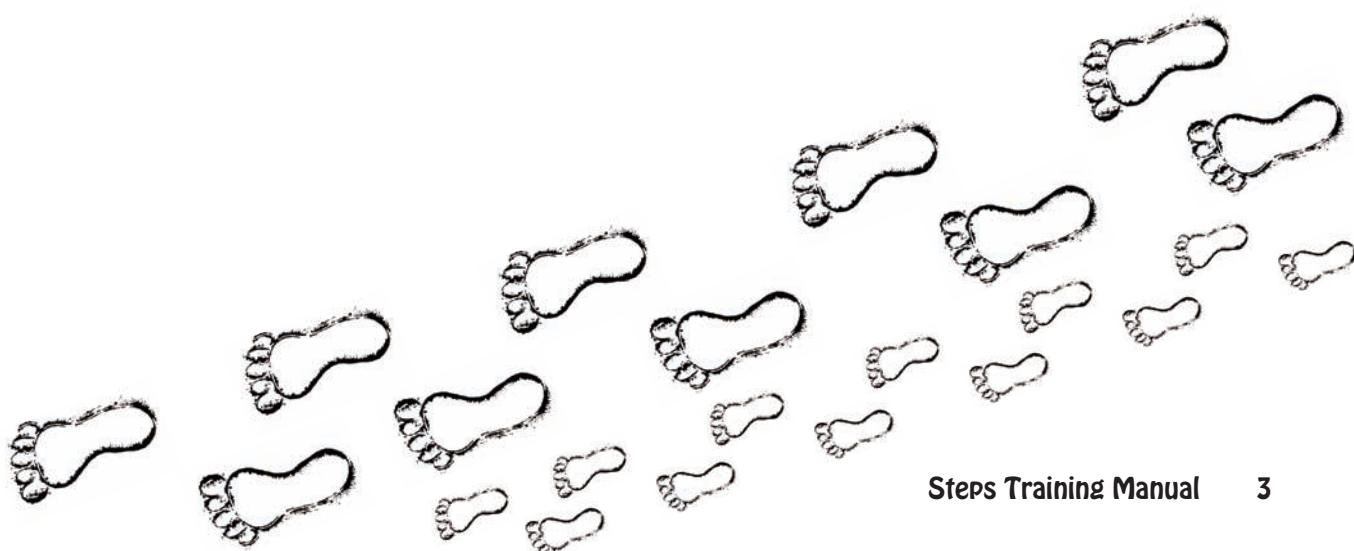
www.salvationarmy.org.uk/afm
afm@salvationarmy.org.uk
020 7367 4956

Contents

Laying the Foundations – Background and Rationale	5
Blocks – Pressures on Families Today	7
Foundation Stones – Bible References	8
Section 1: First Steps – Getting Started	9
Section 2: Next Step – Initial Planning	12
Section 3: Step By Step – Basic Procedures	18
Section 4: Stepping Stones – Discipline	21
Section 5: Key Steps	
a. Self-Esteem	23
b. Recognising Stress in Children	27
Section 6: Footprints	
a. Equal Opportunities	30
b. Cultural Diversity	32
Section 7: Giant Steps – Play	35
Section 8: Step Together – Structures and Session Plans	38
Section 9: <i>Safe & Sound</i>	44

Appendix

Sample Policy Document for Parent and Toddler Groups	48
Useful Organisations	53





**Steps Training Manual
for
Parent and Toddler
Group Leaders**

to be read in conjunction with

**The Good Practice Guide
for Parent and Toddler Groups**

Laying the Foundations

Background and Rationale

**‘Old maps no longer fit the new reality.’
(Church On The Other Side, Brian McLaren 2000)**






The role of the family has changed beyond recognition in the last few decades, leaving many parents feeling isolated and stressed.

PRIORITIES

‘A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove...but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child.’

(Forest E Witcraft 1894-1967)

Our aim is to bring the love of Jesus to our parents and children by providing:

-  **A safe and happy environment for children to play, learn and interact**
-  **A welcoming place for all parents and carers to make friends and feel supported – a place of trust and safety**
-  **A listening ear – it can offer a lifeline to families in crisis and support for parents having a tough time or who are just dealing with the ongoing demands of young children**
-  **The basis for developing long-lasting relationships for young families looking for friendship and support**
-  **The starting point for going forward, maybe branching out into parenting groups and other supportive courses, which offer a surrogate, or extended, family to parents, carers and children who attend.**

Ultimately, parent and toddler groups make a great contribution to the life of a community and to the Kingdom of God.

(The Good Practice Guide for Parent and Toddler Groups, page 5)

It is intended that this resource is used by all parent and toddler leaders to ensure good practice in all that we do in the name of Jesus – to love, value and respect families of all nationalities and cultures without prejudice or discrimination.

This training manual is written with appreciation and thanks for the time, love and commitment that all parent and toddler leaders bring to the groups in their communities.



Family Facts and Figures

- “ There were 17.1 million families in the UK in 2006 – up from 16.5 million in 1996.
- “ Most were still headed by a married couple (71%) although the proportion of cohabiting couple families had increased to 14% from 9% ten years earlier.
- “ There are 7.3 million families with parents of working age in Britain, 1.9 million are one parents.
- “ The Department of Work and Pensions shows that nearly half of all lone parents are out of work.
- “ Children of lone parents who are out of work are five times more likely to be in poverty than children of lone parents in work.
- “ Overall, 48% of children in lone parent families are below the poverty line, compared with 20% of children in two parent families.
- “ Between 2006 and 2007, the provisional number of divorces granted in the UK fell by 2.6% to 144,220 from 148,141. This is the third consecutive fall in the number of UK divorces and the lowest number since 1977 (138,445). The figure is 20% lower than the highest number of divorces, which peaked in 1993 (180,018).
- “ The UK has far more single parent families than any other European Union nation.
- “ There are more four-and five-generation families today than there were 100 years ago.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics>



<http://www.divorce-online.co.uk>

‘The purpose of *The Seeds of Exclusion* , the fourth in a series of reports published by The Salvation Army since 1999, is to identify how patterns of early-life experience contain the seeds of later problems, and how The Salvation Army along and others might tackle them.’

Commissioner John Matear
(Leader of The Salvation Army UK Territory
with the Republic of Ireland)

Blocks

Pressures on Families Today

-  Basic norms of society have changed
-  Decline in church attendance
-  Patterns of parenting and partnering have changed
-  Increase in blended families
-  Children may be parented by a number of parents
-  Emergence of single-gender families
-  Breakdown in community life
-  Increasing competitiveness in all areas of family life
-  Financial pressures
-  Greater range of choices
-  Less time spent in the family home
-  Greater freedom – leading to greater temptation
-  Increase in consumerism – throwaway society
-  Greater expectations in all areas of life
-  Poorer parenting role models
-  Fewer boundaries
-  More isolation



Foundation Stones

Bible References

'He chose us in him before the creation of the world'

(Ephesians 1:4 New International Version)

'The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood'

(John 1:14 The Message)

'Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few."

(Matthew 9:35-38 New International Version)

'He called a little child, whom he placed among them. And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes a humble place – becoming like this child – is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me."

(Matthew 18:2-5 Today's New International Version)

[Jesus said to his followers,] 'You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.'

(Matthew 5:14-16 Today's New International Version)

Section 1 – First Steps









Getting Started

Establishing a relationship with others involves personal skills including communication, recognising the intent of the other person developing trust and showing empathy... These personal skills are developed during the early years and are considerably influenced by parents and the environment in which the child lives.

(The Seeds of Exclusion 2008)

SETTING UP A PARENT AND TODDLER GROUP






Share the vision with:

-  God – it is important that God is part of the plan and that your idea is part of his plan!
-  Corps/church leaders – it is important that the corps/church ‘owns’ the group
-  Other parent and toddler group leaders
-  Online groups
-  Young mothers
-  Health visitors and local community leaders
-  Pre-School Learning Alliance, Care for the Family and other organisations which specialise in under-fives,
-  Personnel within the corps/church who may be able to help by praying, supporting financially, sorting out legislation or making the tea!

Wherever there is an opportunity, talk about the idea to encourage and empower others to take hold of the vision.

RESEARCH

Resource material from other organisations, eg, Care for the Family, Scripture Union, Mothers’ Union

-  Research on the internet. Find out what is available
-  Research local amenities – if necessary, carry out a needs analysis
-  Network with other corps/churches
-  Source Government publications concerning preschool children
-  Research current legislation

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.underfives.co.uk

www.rbck.gov.uk

www.netmums.co.uk

www.careforthefamily.org.uk

Present your vision to your corps/church either on a Sunday at the service or at a leaders' meeting. It is helpful if the wider corps/church shares in the vision for parent and toddlers as this encourages a sense of everyone investing in the initiative.

Possible suggestions to be included in the presentation;

- 💡 A 'vision statement' (see below)
- 💡 Initial planning
- 💡 Personnel
- 💡 Premises
- 💡 Opening times
- 💡 Advertising programme
- 💡 Budget
- 💡 Training
- 💡 Health and safety
- 💡 Equipment
- 💡 Other resources

A VISION STATEMENT

It is important to incorporate your corps/church Mission Statement when preparing the Vision Statement of your group.

The Vision Statement declares your aim for the group and how the group is an aspect of the church ministry.

The wording should be realistic, relevant to all those who will read it, jargon-free, precise and easy to understand.

Write two or three and ask others to comment and help select the most suitable one. If necessary, link up with other parent and toddler groups to gain some ideas.

Section 1 – First Steps

Tasks

Write a vision statement for a parent and toddler group.

(Think of the needs of the corps/church and the community as you prepare the vision for the future.)

Think of ideas to encourage your corps/church to see the importance of parent and toddler groups.
















Section 2 – Next Step

Initial Planning






ASSESS WHAT NEEDS TO BE ACHIEVED BEFORE THE GROUP COMMENCES

Decide on:





-  Number of parents and children (and decide whether or not to keep a waiting list)
-  How many sessions per week
-  Day/s and time/s
-  Length of sessions
-  Cost of sessions
-  A name for the group
-  Ages of children
-  Types of activities
-  School holidays and public holidays
-  Consider older children – are they welcome during the holidays?
-  Equal opportunities
-  Are the necessary health and safety procedures in place?
-  Cultural diversity – is there a policy of acceptance of everyone?

TEAM

Select suitable personnel for your team

-  Leader/s
-  Treasurer
-  Helper/s
-  Hostess
-  Other

The team may come together in a number of ways:

-  Friends with a shared vision and passion
-  Committee-led group
-  Available volunteers from the corps/church to develop church initiative
-  Paid leader and workers

A team which does not work together successfully is unlikely to have a happy parent and toddler group as any tensions in the team will inevitably affect the group.

It is important, therefore, to ensure that team members:

- ” Share the same vision
- ” Plan together
- ” Pray together
- ” Understand their particular roles
- ” Is accountable to the corps/church
- ” Receive support from the corps/church leaders and members
- ” Regularly evaluate the work they are doing
- ” Are open to change if necessary
- ” Follow clear guidelines and policies

PREMISES

Some points to consider:

- ” Select most suitable room/hall
- ” Space for parking buggies
- ” Toilet/baby-changing facilities (including suitable facilities for disposal of nappies)
- ” Access to building (stairs, steps, doorways, ramps)
- ” Lockable storage space
- ” Security of premises
- ” Fire exits/fire extinguishing equipment
- ” Who else will use the room/hall/toilets?
- ” Who will care for the room/facilities?

(The Good Practice Guide for Parent and Toddler Groups pages 19-21)



ADVERTISING

Design an attractive leaflet and poster for handouts to include:

- “ Group name
- “ Information about the corps/church – leaders’ names, etc)
- “ Venue
- “ Day and time of opening
- “ Ages of children
- “ Contact details (telephone, fax, email)
- “ Cost per session
- “ Activities
- “ Special needs

DISTRIBUTION

- “ Health visitors
- “ Doctors’ surgeries
- “ Child Information Services
- “ Sure Start
- “ Home-start
- “ Social Services
- “ Libraries
- “ And anywhere else where young families meet up (eg, Starbucks, gym)!

BUDGET

While parent and toddlers groups should not be seen as a profit-making venture, it is important to cover costs. It may be worth sourcing funding within the local community through applying for grants or hold fundraising events.

Possible costs may include:

- 💡 Rent
- 💡 Heating and lighting
- 💡 Staffing costs

Costs to consider:

- 💡 Equipment
- 💡 Toys
- 💡 Refreshments
- 💡 Safety requirements
- 💡 Legal requirements

Charges for sessions:

- 💡 Every week or month
- 💡 Per child
- 💡 Per family

Ongoing expenses:

- 💡 Replacement of toys and equipment
- 💡 New equipment
- 💡 Refreshments
- 💡 Christmas
- 💡 Birthdays
- 💡 Summer days out



TRAINING

- ” Child Protection Training – Salvation Army *Safe & Sound* (See Section 9, page 44)
- ” Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks
- ” First aid – check what courses are available from your local St John Ambulance Service, including how to deal with emergencies involving infants (*The Good Practice Guide for Parent and Toddler Groups* page 19 – First Aid)
- ” Fire training – advice from the Fire Brigade (include access, exits and fire procedure in the welcome pack). Instigate regular fire drills and ensure that all know how to evacuate the building quickly, safely and efficiently
- ” *Steps* and *Building Blocks* training

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- ” Special medical conditions (allow for this on the registration form)
- ” Child safety gate
- ” Plug covers
- ” Safety mats
- ” Flooring
- ” Check that other equipment/furniture in the location cannot be a potential hazard
- ” Parent and toddler group accident book
- ” Incident book
- ” Regular inspection, repair and cleaning of toys and equipment (enquire whether there is someone in the corps/church who is willing to take this task on – it is a good way of involving other, perhaps older, members of the corps/church)
- ” Cleanliness and security of premises
- ” Insurance
- ” Separate baby area
- ” Separate area for teas/coffees (if possible)

EQUIPMENT

- “ Select appropriate toys and equipment for the age group of children and for planned activities
- “ All toys should stimulate imagination, exploration and creativity within the child
- “ They should also stimulate fine and large motor movements, eye/hand co-ordination, hearing and speech development
- “ Toys should be in good condition and comply with British safety regulations
- “ Child-size tables and chairs are preferable for safety reasons
- “ Any other equipment as required, depending on size of venue, safety regulations, needs of children and funding!

Section 2 – Next Step

Tasks

Think of the ages and stages of development of the children in your group.

List the sort of toys and equipment you would use for ages:

0 – 1

1 – 2

2 – 3

Think about your setting. What are the restrictions and how can you overcome them?

What do you see as your greatest challenge in running a parent and toddler group?



Section 3 – Step By Step

Basic Procedures

REGISTRATION FORM

For the safety and protection of children, it is advisable that all parents/carers joining the group should fill in a registration form (sample form in *The Good Practice Guide for Parent and Toddler Groups*, page 32).

Registration forms should be easily read and understood. Symbols, smiley faces and/or tick boxes may work effectively.

Most groups find that having someone sitting at a table and greeting parents and children as they arrive is the easiest method of weekly registration. This ensures that everyone has a personal welcome and that funds are collected from everyone as they arrive. It is important that, while placing a value on the group, leaders are aware that some people cannot afford to contribute and this should be dealt with in a loving and sensitive manner. No one should be prevented from joining the group because they cannot afford to pay for the sessions. However, if someone consistently refuses to pay, it is then at the discretion of the leaders as to whether the parent/carer is allowed to continue to attend.

Some groups prefer to collect the funds during the session, when they have an opportunity to talk to each parent/carer. It is important to do whatever works best for each individual group.

DATA PROTECTION DECLARATION

A statement should be made on the form about how the information supplied on it will be stored and used and who will have access to it. The person completing the form must be asked to give their written consent for the information to be used in the ways indicated. The information supplied must not be used for any other purpose other than those stipulated. For further advice contact your own corps/church.

WELCOME PACKS

Welcome packs are a good way to make new members feel valued. Each pack should look bright and attractive and include information about the corps/church and the church leaders, session days and times, session routine, outline of the building to show toilets, baby-changing facilities, kitchen, etc.

Packs may also contain leaflets on various life issues, perhaps a verse of Scripture (depending on your group), a small gift and anything else which is thought to be appropriate.

Remember that some new parents/carers are reluctant to ask too many questions. If welcome packs are available, it is possible to take one home and read all the relevant information, thus encouraging a sense of belonging to the group.

ATTENDANCE RECORD

It is essential that a weekly attendance record is kept safely by the Team, so that there is a record of who is on the premises.

This is important for safety reasons but also allows the Team to have a record of those who haven't attended for some time.

A card or letter can then be sent to let the family know that they have been missed!

MEDICAL CONDITIONS RECORD

It is essential to keep a record of any medical conditions and allergies. While parents/carers are responsible for their children, it is important that all the team members have an awareness of the health needs of all the children.

ACCIDENT BOOK

In the event of an accident, all details must be recorded in an accident book with details such as time, type of injury, first aid administered and whether there was a necessity for a hospital visit.

It is important that a parent/carer signs the report and is happy with the recorded statement.

The accident book should be kept in an easily accessible cupboard or drawer.

INCIDENT BOOK

Keeping a record of other incidents, such as fighting between children or damage to personal belongings or corps/church property, is also advisable.

INSURANCE

The group must have insurance cover in case an adult or child is injured. It is important that you check with the corps/church or organisation to find out the nature of the cover provided, to decide whether or not it is appropriate for parent and toddler groups.

If it is an independent group, check whether the building in which you meet has its own insurance.

Keep an inventory of what you have and what it costs to replace the items listed. When planning trips away, the leader should take positive steps to promote safety and ensure proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents. Particular thought should be given to additional insurance and child protection procedures.

(The Good Practice Guide for Parent and Toddler Groups, pages 14 and 15)

Section 3 – Step by Step

Tasks

Make a sample welcome pack. What (in your opinion) are the most important items to be included?

Think about cover, content and your corps/church programme.

Think about your venue. What are the health and safety hazards?

What measures can be taken to ensure that the parent and toddler group can meet in a safe environment?

Section 4 – Stepping Stones

Discipline

DISCIPLINE AT THE PARENT AND TODDLER GROUP

Parents/carers are responsible for their own children at all times.







The team, however, is responsible for the good practice at parent and toddler group which ensures boundaries are in place and that awkward situations are dealt with effectively and appropriately, so that sessions offer a safe and positive environment for all who attend.

It is therefore important that the team members have some guidelines in place which they can refer to when there is a conflict.

Behaviour such as hitting, biting, pulling hair, name-calling, bad language, etc must be considered as unacceptable and must be dealt with promptly to avoid the development of further conflict.

Failure to deal with such matters may result in parents/carers and children feeling very unhappy and undervalued – and may result in them leaving the group.

GUIDELINES

-  Decide which behaviours are unacceptable in the group
-  Decide as a team how to deal with difficult situations
-  Decide which member of the team is best suited to deal with difficult issues
-  Decide on useful strategies such as distraction, negotiation, etc
-  Explain the guidelines to parents/carers – perhaps through a letter in the welcome pack.
-  Discuss general behaviour issues at story time so that parents/carers and children receive the message in a non-threatening way. (There are many books available which deal with difficult issues)



In the event of a major incident, eg, where a child has been hurt or there is a conflict between parents, it is essential that the situation is dealt with very sensitively. The person who is delegated to deal with the incident should:

- 💬 Listen to both sides, ensuring that no one feels attacked or blamed in any way. (The conversation should be held away from the main group)
- 💬 Have an awareness of tone of voice, body language and space
- 💬 Look at possible options to find a way forward
- 💬 Gently speak to each parent/carer to find out if there are any relevant circumstances which may be affecting behaviour
- 💬 Encourage a verbal apology to draw a line under the situation

If parents refuse to accept responsibility and the above suggestions have been tried, the team may decide that the safety and enjoyment of the group is paramount and may then have to refer to the Guidelines (of which every parent and carer should have a copy), in the hope that the parent/carer will choose to find a way forward for the good of the group.

If, however, the parent/carer and child/children decide to leave, it is important to keep in touch through visits, cards, telephone calls, invitations to special events, etc, so that the link is maintained in the hope that the family will return at some time in the future.

Parenting programmes are a safe and supportive way to look at behaviour issues without parents feeling that they are the only ones with problems.

Parenting sessions should be fun and should build confidence and self-esteem in the parents' role, as parents empower each other through sharing ideas and strategies.

Section 4 – Stepping Stones

Tasks

Draw up a discipline policy for your parent and toddler group.

Outline some strategies for dealing with difficult behaviour.

Section 5 – Key Steps

a. Self-Esteem

‘I am fearfully and wonderfully made’ (Psalm 139:14 NIV).

I have loved you with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3 NIV).

Self-esteem is all about trusting yourself, believing in yourself and, above all, liking yourself.’ (Self-Esteem Wise Guides – Anita Naik)




Every experience that we have is affected by and has an impact on the way we feel, think and behave.

The entire process of feeling, thinking and behaving can in turn influence or be influenced by our level of self-esteem.

As society today would seem to be in turmoil with a lack of stability, security, a lack of community and a lack positive role modelling, many children grow up with a lack of value in themselves and in the world around them.

WHAT IS SELF-ESTEEM?

People with good self-esteem are confident about:

-  Their worth and acceptability – they know they are lovable and valued
-  Their ability to contribute – they know they are capable and competent
-  Feeling good about themselves and convey this confidence to others

‘We really do need to think of what happens in childhood. We should be supporting and educating earlier. Teachers in schools and general practitioners may be best placed to help here if adequately trained and supported to do so. These are the frontline people who see most families and can pick up emerging problems at as early a stage as possible and assist without stigmatising children or their families.

Professor Pamela Taylor – *The Seeds of Exclusion* (Salvation Army 2008)

Professor Taylor was speaking specifically about teachers and GPs, however, parent and toddler group leaders are also on the front line as so many families come through corps/church doors every week.

Parent and toddler group leaders have the opportunity to help children to feel valued and loved for themselves, ensuring that their self-esteem is nurtured so that they can feel confident in themselves as happy children and as healthy people in later years.

When children know that they are loved unconditionally, that their feelings matter, and that they are of great value, then their confidence and self-worth blossoms.

From this will spring the confidence and security they need to understand their feelings, manage their behaviour and get along with others.

Good self-esteem also encourages independence, an ability to ask for help if needed, an inner source of support to cope with life's knocks - and to love!!

BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

- 💬 Love – it must be unconditional and expressed
- 💬 Praise – as often as possible
- 💬 Acceptance – accept that all children are unique, with their own gifts and abilities
- 💬 Expectations – allow a child to be the best for him/her – not for anyone else!
- 💬 Language – use positive language as often as possible. Say 'No' sparingly but mean it when it is used. Children need firm boundaries.
- 💬 Labelling – never label a child as shy, stupid, lazy, etc. Labels may stick
- 💬 Conversation – never talk about a child with others in his/her hearing – unless the conversation is positive
- 💬 Feelings – allow children to feel their feelings. Don't try to tell them how they feel
- 💬 Listening – value children by listening to them
- 💬 Apologise – say sorry when necessary. This helps children to understand that it is OK to make a mistake
- 💬 Honesty – being honest with a child encourages them to be honest too
- 💬 Hugs and cuddles – children thrive on physical touch so encourage parents/carers to hug their children. The team must always bear in mind child protection procedures

CIRCLE TIME

Circle Time was instituted by Murray White to build confidence and self-esteem in children.

Circle Time begins with everyone, adults and children, sitting either on the floor or on chairs. It is important that everyone is on the same level.

Begin with a round using a toy, set of keys or another object. The adult says an incomplete sentence, gives an example to finish it off, then the child next to him/her repeats the phrase and puts his/her own ending to it, and so on, passing the object on the way.

There are three rules:

1. Children are allowed to pass the object on without speaking.
2. No one else can speak except the person holding the object.
3. Everyone must be listened to.

Some enjoy the chance to be really imaginative, and many children recognise it as a safe environment where they can really say what they are thinking, eg,

- ⚙ Today I'm feeling – nervous, or
- ⚙ I wish I was with – my dad.

The rounds can be about all sorts of things, eg,

- ⚙ What makes me laugh is ...
- ⚙ My favourite TV programme is ...

Circle Time allows shy children to feel included. They can be part of the group without the pressure to participate by passing on the object. However, usually even the most withdrawn child will eventually want to join in. It also encourages children to identify with each other, eg, 'My favourite food is – pizza.' Other children will start to become interested because their favourite food is pizza too!

Another way to help all children feel included, and build self-esteem, is to have a 'Special Child' every session.

Balloons are blown up with the name of each child inside the balloon.

Each day one balloon is popped and the child whose name appears is a special child for the day. He/she is presented with a badge which says 'I Am Special'.

It is a nice idea to ask the child to leave the room and have the others think of positive things to say about him/her. When the child returns those children tell the special child lots of great things.

You can imagine how this boosts self-esteem.

Self-worth forms the core of a child's personality. His/her attitude towards himself/herself has a direct bearing on how he/she lives all parts of his/her life.

Self-esteem is the mainspring that decides our success or failure as a human being.

Section 5 – Key Steps

a. Self-Esteem

Tasks

Brainstorm ways to build a child's self-esteem.

Make a list of situations which may affect self-esteem.

Section 5 – Key Steps

b. Recognising Stress in Children

‘For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’(Jeremiah 29:11 NIV).









Children are affected differently by different sorts of stress compared to adults and manage their stress differently

‘Children are unlikely to be able to articulate the stress they feel, and they are more likely to show that they have a problem through their behaviour.’

(Alsop and McCaffrey. How to Cope with Childhood Stress)

According to research, children who are stressed will ‘act out’ in certain ways.

Some of these changes in behaviour include:

-  Changes in sleep patterns
-  Regression – thumb sucking, bedwetting, etc, when past that stage of development
-  Becoming very clingy
-  Change in eating patterns
-  Temper tantrums
-  Rocking
-  Biting
-  Crying for a long period of time

It must be remembered that children can behave in many and varied ways, but those who know the children should be aware of any changing patterns of behaviour, eg, if the child is normally happy and outgoing and there is a noticeable difference over a couple of weeks, then this may be cause for concern.

In view of The Salvation Army’s publication – *The Seeds of Exclusion*, parent and toddler leaders are in a prime position to recognise the signs of stress and to support families to alleviate the stress they are going through by offering a listening ear, by showing love and kindness and by pointing them to other sources of support should this be necessary.



EVENTS WHICH MAY AFFECT A CHILD'S BEHAVIOUR

- 💬 Loss of parent (death or divorce)
- 💬 Loss of close relative (eg, grandparent)
- 💬 Getting lost – being left alone
- 💬 Bullying
- 💬 Last to be picked for a team game
- 💬 Ridiculed in front of others
- 💬 Parental rows
- 💬 Moving home/school
- 💬 Going to the dentist or hospital

<http://www.relaxationexpert.co.uk/signsofstressinchildren.html>

It is also important to be aware of the parents/carers behaviour towards their child/children.

Worrying behaviour includes:

- 💬 Mainly negative attention – the relationship is hostile
- 💬 Persistent put-downs
- 💬 High expectations of the child which are not appropriate for the age and stage of development
- 💬 Anger towards the child
- 💬 Ignoring the child
- 💬 No boundaries
- 💬 Smacking the child

Or statements such as:

- 💬 I wish he/she had never been born
- 💬 He/she makes me so angry
- 💬 I wanted a baby to love me
- 💬 He/she was a big mistake
- 💬 I wish he/she was more like his sister/brother
- 💬 If there are any concerns regarding child protection issues, parent and toddler group leaders must follow the legal guidelines to protect the child from any further harm.

If in doubt speak to your corps/church leader to ensure that the situation is dealt with appropriately.

Section 5 – Key Steps

b. Recognising Stress in Children

Tasks

A child who is usually happy will not let his mum out of his sight. He is quite tearful and appears unwilling to share toys.

What might be the problem?

How can we help?

Compile a list of helplines which may be referred to in support of children/families who are stressed.



Section 6 – Footprints

a. Equal Opportunities

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AT PARENT AND TODDLERS

‘Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness”

(Genesis 1:26 NIV)

As a Christian church, we seek to empower each Parent/carer and child/children to celebrate their uniqueness in Christ.










As a Christian church we aim to promote equality of opportunity by welcoming and including every parent, grandparent and carer, whatever their age, gender, disability, marital status, ethnic origin, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or ability in spoken English.

As a Christian church, we aim to promote equality of opportunity by welcoming and including every child by providing a positive play experience for them regardless of gender, disability, ethnic origin, religious background or ability in spoken English.

The Challenge

The challenge for parent and toddlers groups is to treat everyone with respect – and to accept the particular needs of some without discrimination.

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

-  Positive Christian role modelling through our attitude and actions with parents/carers and children
-  Positive communication to gain awareness of particular issues and to build up confidence and trust
-  A willingness to support and respect parents’/carers’ wishes
-  Identification of areas where changes may need to be made eg, health and safety issues, use of equipment, room layout
-  Identification of any additional resources which may support ‘particular needs’
-  Use of Circle Time to engage with Parents and children in positive discussions
-  Use of story time to discuss particular needs in a non – threatening way so that there is understanding in the group. (It is important to gain parental permission before this discussion as some parents may not feel comfortable with such a discussion)
-  Parental permission sought before photographs are taken at Parent and Toddlers
-  Identification of staff training needs – basic skills, sign language, play skills etc

If necessary – seek advice from other Health Professionals. Ensure that Registration Forms have all the relevant information in case of emergency. Ensure that parents are aware of the Data protection policy.

Section 6 – Footprints

a. Equal Opportunities

Tasks

In twos – discuss the issues involved if a child with special (particular) needs joins the parent and toddler group.

List ways to encourage the child to feel accepted.

List ways to support the parent/s.



Section 6 – Footprints

b. Cultural Diversity

‘Be of the same mind one towards another’ (Romans 12:16 NIV)

Different is just different – different is not wrong (Author unknown)








DEFINITIONS OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Cultural diversity is the variety of human societies or cultures in a specific region.

The Challenge

The challenge for parent and toddler groups is to welcome, accept and value all people irrespective of colour, race or culture in an attitude of understanding, while exploring and supporting similarities and differences that we share.

Celebrate cultural diversity by:

-  Accepting that everyone is equal in God’s eyes
-  Valuing all parents/carers and children – and treat them with respect
-  Creating an understanding of cultural diversity within the parent and toddler group leadership team
-  Acknowledging any existing judgmental attitudes and prejudices
-  Planning activities which are inclusive
-  Acknowledging other cultural festivals while celebrating the Christian faith
-  Accepting the decisions of parents/carers not to share in our Christian festivals

IDEAS FOR A MULTICULTURAL PARENT AND TODDLER GROUP

- ” In the welcome pack, include a welcome letter which is in a number of languages
- ” Spend time with the parents/carers to answer any of their concerns
- ” Ensure that the environment is welcoming to all by creating a welcome wall with cards written in a number of languages
- ” If possible, print leaflets and posters in different languages
- ” For families where English is not their first language, try to keep to the same routine so that parents/carers and children feel familiar with their surroundings
- ” Ask parents to suggest ways in which the group can support them (eg, perhaps the words of the songs could be written up on large sheets to encourage the parents to get to know them and be able to join in)
- ” Try to arrange the seating so that no one feels excluded
- ” Observe the group for any signs of discrimination and deal with the situation promptly
- ” Have an awareness of differing styles of parenting in different cultures
- ” Use Circle Time as a tool to develop skills for acceptance and inclusiveness
- ” Ask an ‘established’ parent/carer to look after a new parent/carer, especially if there are likely to be language barriers. This will help to build relationships and encourage inclusiveness.

MORE PRACTICAL IDEAS

- ” Display posters to show life in various cultures and use these as a basis for story time to help children understand cultural diversity
- ” Ask a parent/carer to share a story from their ethnic background
- ” Ensure that the house corner and dressing-up box reflect cultural diversity (different coloured dolls, ethnic clothes, etc)
- ” If possible translate songs and rhymes into other languages
- ” Teach all the children to say ‘hello’ and ‘goodbye’ in other languages. This is a fun exercise for all the group
- ” Use music and dancing from other cultures
- ” Ensure that the books in the book corner reflect the diversity of the group
- ” Encourage the children to bring interesting items from home to set up a theme table
- ” Celebrate the important religious festivals by having a party to share food from different cultures. However, while being accepting of others, it is important to adhere to Christian principles and beliefs in all that takes place at the parent and toddler group
- ” Hold an ethnic dress day to encourage parents/carers and children to celebrate all cultures

Section 6 – Footprints

b. Cultural Diversity

Tasks

In groups discuss the positive aspects of addressing multicultural issues at parent and toddler groups:

For parents

For children

Suggest ways in which your parent and toddler group could be more inclusive.

Section 7 – Giant Steps

Play









‘Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God’ (Mark 10:14 KJV).

Play is one of the essential experiences of childhood. It is fundamental to a child’s learning and future development.

‘Children derive great pleasure from the hard work of playing, which is why they keep on doing it.’

(Elizabeth Matterson – *Play with a purpose for Under-Sevens*)

Play gives children an opportunity:

-  To become independent
-  To build confidence and self-esteem
-  To deal with positive and negative feelings
-  To develop fine and gross motor skills
-  To develop co-operation and negotiation skills
-  To be challenged to try something different
-  To question and interact with peers and adults
-  To extend vocabulary

Play is a process. The child enjoys the process more than the end result. It is important that adults allow children to be involved in the total process rather than cutting or sorting for them.

Adults are more concerned with the end result, so may try to perfect the child’s work which is frustrating for children and inhibits their learning and may damage their self-esteem.

Children should never feel forced into doing anything with which they are not comfortable. It is important, too, to bear in mind the age and stage of development of the children in the group.



Why do children play?

- 💡 To understand their world and their place in it
- 💡 To have fun
- 💡 To develop vocabulary
- 💡 To develop social skills
- 💡 To develop problem-solving skills
- 💡 To develop hand and body control and hand/eye co-ordination

Through play, children develop an understanding of how things work in the world in which they live.

STAGES OF PLAY

0–1 yearnon-social (mum/dad are his/her world)

2 yearsonlooker (enjoys watching others)

3 yearsparallel play (plays alongside others)

4 yearssocial play (able to co-operate and share)

Story time

Story and singing time are a very special part of the parent and toddler group session as they are a positive means of developing communication with children who learn so much from listening to a story and from singing. It is good to encourage parents to join in at story and singing time as it promotes bonding with their children and allows them to enter into their children's world.

Singing encourages:

- 💡 Language development – words of songs, etc
- 💡 Social development – interacting with others
- 💡 Rhythm – tunes, timings, etc
- 💡 Emotional development – a safe way to deal with feelings

Children love to role-play a story so whenever possible allow for this activity. A story such as 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' is an excellent story for lots of learning such as:

- “ Language development – forest, bears, chairs, porridge, spoon etc
- “ Big, bigger and biggest
- “ Maths – three bears, three chairs, etc
- “ Emotional development – fear, joy, anger
- “ Social development – communicate, see another person's perspective, carry out tasks (make the porridge, set the table, etc)

Other stories which are good for role-play are 'Hansel and Gretel', 'Little Red Riding Hood', and 'The Three Little Pigs'.

At the parent and toddler group, it is important that we allow the children to enjoy their play experience. It is not the job of parent and toddler group team to play for them but to help them gain the most they possibly can from every play experience.

Section 7 – Giant Steps

Play

Tasks

Choose a storybook from the book corner.

Write down all the possible learning outcomes for a child who hears the story.

Think of the layout of your venue.

Is it possible to make any changes which would encourage more positive play experiences?
















Section 8 – Step Together

Structures and Session Plans

When all the preparations are in place, it is essential to ensure that parents/carers and grandparents feel welcome and accepted at the parent and toddler group.

Some ideas to encourage a positive experience for all who attend include:

-  A bright, welcoming venue with toys set out as attractively as possible (it is good practice to ensure that all preparations are complete before the door is opened)
-  Comfortable seating for adults and children
-  Someone to show new people around the building so that they are familiar with where the toilets and baby-changing facilities are, etc
-  An awareness of special needs for parents and children
-  An awareness of cultural diversity
-  A personal welcome to everyone by name
-  A leaflet (in the welcome pack) to explain the structure of the sessions
-  Introduction of the team
-  Tea/coffee available
-  Name badges and/or t-shirts are helpful for encouraging families to get to know each other
-  Magazines/books available on a variety of topics – including Christian magazines and books
-  An ideas board available where parents can write suggestions for themes, crafts, etc. This will encourage a sense of belonging
-  A wall where children's work can be displayed

PARENTS/CARERS AT THE PARENT AND TODDLER GROUP

Parents/carers are very important as they play a huge part in the successful running of the group.

It is essential that they are involved as much as possible, both in the planning and during the sessions.

The team should make time to get to know each parent by:

- “ Building up trusting relationships through informal chats about families, pets, holidays and by finding out about any special events in the family which may be shared (with permission) at the parent and toddler group
- “ Including parents in planning of themes, crafts and days out, etc
- “ Ensuring that no member of the team discusses any parent/carer/child with anyone else in the group without permission
- “ Including parents in the programmes eg, ask a musical parent to lead singing sometimes or ask a fireman dad to come in his uniform and talk to the parents/carers/children about fire risk
- “ Asking parents for ideas either through a questionnaire, suggestion box or ideas board
- “ Encouraging parents to support the group by organising fundraising events
- “ Asking parents/carers/grandparents to knit dolls' clothes for the group
- “ Encouraging everyone to help at snack time and tidy-up time
- “ Ensuring that parents/carers take children to the toilet, apply plasters or give medicine, in keeping with child protection procedures
- “ Encouraging a sense of caring, sharing and belonging!



CHILDREN AT THE PARENT AND TODDLER GROUP

- “ Every child is special and unique with different skills and abilities
- “ Every child comes from a different home environment which will have an impact on the child's behaviour
- “ Some children have special needs and require more help and support than others
- “ Children are at different ages and stages of development which will impact on the toys they choose to play with and will impact on how they play
- “ Each child should be treated with respect at all times
- “ Each child needs to know the boundaries within the group
- “ Children's work is not perfect. The process for them is much more important than the finished product
- “ Children don't want adults to do their work for them. It is not much fun if the adult insists on cutting and sticking for them
- “ Children have different personalities. Some enjoy rough and tumble play while others prefer quiet activities
- “ Children should never feel forced into doing anything with which they are not comfortable
- “ Children love to have their work displayed so if possible have a wall where their work may be enjoyed
- “ Parents/Carers should be encouraged to take work home if the child wishes to take his/her work home for others to see
- “ Children often show their feelings through their behaviour so always remain observant to any changes which may indicate a problem
- “ Children thrive on praise – so give them lots (when it is appropriate)
- “ Treat all children fairly. Do not compare them with anyone else as this will greatly affect their self-esteem
- “ Remember birthdays and try to make them special for each child. One of the older members of the corps/church may enjoy making and keeping a birthday book

**These years are the most important in a child's life
and help to shape the person they become.**

THE PARENT AND TODDLER GROUP SESSION

The session structure will vary from group to group, but it is important that there is a variety of structured and unstructured activities which encourage children to make positive choices. Some children struggle with too much choice and may need guidance in the first few weeks.

The set-up of the room is very important to ensure that everyone has enough space and that there is something to suit all ages and all stages of development.

It is also a good idea to have different areas such as a story corner where children can look at books or listen to music.

A baby corner is a good idea with baby gyms, rattles, mirrors, soft toys and soft blankets. This allows babies to enjoy the parent and toddler group too, while being safe.

Some children live in homes where there is very little space and few opportunities to have their own corner, so if it is possible have such a space at the parent and toddler group. Big cuddly toys are great to hug and encourage a sense of security, so if possible have some large teddies in the corner too.

Quiet activities such as jigsaws, matching shapes, drawing activities and cutting-out activities allow a child to sit quietly and develop hand/eye co-ordination and other fine motor skills, while also developing problem-solving skills.

It is always good to have games and toys where parents and children can play together to encourage bonding.

Team games encourage children to have an understanding of how to take turns.

A dressing-up box allows children to express themselves through role play. Some children will wish to wear the same outfit every week as this helps them to feel secure.

Painting, though messy, is a very enjoyable activity for children and if possible this activity should be available at some sessions. Through painting, children can explore colour and shape while enjoying the relaxation of the activity. Some children who do not have the words to express their feelings may use their paintings to do so.

Dough is easy to make and a great stress buster!! The possibilities of things to make with it are almost endless.

Many children need to burn off their endless energy so it is essential that there are bigger toys available such as ride-on trucks, climbing frames, small bicycles, etc. It is essential that this activity is away from the baby corner and quiet activities to avoid collisions.

As children play inside more often in today's society, physical activity allows them to develop their muscles, encourages spatial awareness and allows children to push boundaries in a safe environment.

A doll's house is a great investment for a parent and toddler group, as many children love to play mummies and daddies and often act out situations which are happening at home, such as changing a doll's nappy, when a new baby has arrived in the family.

The size and shape of the building as well as numbers attending will often dictate what variety of toys may be used. It keeps things exciting for parents, children, and the team if toys and activities are varied from time to time.

It is also important to have enough toys to suit all ages and stages so that children don't become bored while waiting for an opportunity to play with a particular toy which interests them.

Some groups plan themes and use toys and activities which fit the theme.

Every group is different so it is important to do what works for you.

SUGGESTIONS FOR A PARENT AND TODDLER GROUP SESSION

- 9:00 am – Room set up for parents'/carers'/children's arrival.
Ensure that the room looks very welcoming. Adult chairs may be in groups or circles. If possible try to keep seating as inclusive as possible to avoid cliques forming.
- 9:00–9:30am – Welcome and registration
Welcome each parent/carer/child by name.
- 9:00–9:45 am – Free play
Time for children to choose their play area and an opportunity for parents/carers to chat to each other and to the team
- 9:45–10:30 am – Craft, dough, painting, baking, water play, sand play, etc.
Parents/carers should be encouraged to help with craft, etc, as it is an opportunity to share with their children and to value their work. (It is important, however, that the child does the work and not the parent!)
- 10:30 am – Clear up craft table and messy play. Clear large toys. Parents/carers and children should be encouraged to help at this time.
- 10:45 am – Snack time.
Try to offer healthy options – fruit, wholemeal toast, eggs and cheese. Check registration details for allergies. Children love baking so occasionally they could bake scones and eat them at snack time. Decorating biscuits with fruit such as strawberries is very appealing to children too. Tea/coffee time for parents, ensure that no hot tea/coffee cups are left where little hands can reach.
- 11:00–11:15 am – Story and song time
Parents/carers should be encouraged to join in as they can then sing the songs at home with the children. Parents/carers and children have an opportunity to enjoy being together in this way which encourages healthy, happy, trusting, relationships. This is a good time to have Circle Time which builds up confidence and self-esteem.
- 11:15–11:30 am – Parachute and soft balls are a great way to finish off, providing all the other toys have been cleared away.
- 11:30 am – Home time
Many groups have a special goodbye song which lets the children know that the session is over and it is definitely time to go home!

Section 8 – Step Together

Structures and Session Plans

Tasks

Think of a theme for the parent and toddler group and plan a session to fit in with the theme, eg, winter, holidays, colours, etc.

List some of the key things which you will take away from the training session.

Think of one thing that you are going to do differently at the parent and toddler group.

Share with the group.



Section 9 – Safe & Sound

Although leaders/helpers of parent and toddler groups and babysong groups will not have direct responsibility for children in their groups (all should be accompanied by a parent or carer), it is necessary for everyone working/volunteering within these settings to understand and operate within the guidelines set by The Salvation Army in its *Safe & Sound* document.

INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE TO SAFE & SOUND

The Home Office code of practice, *Safe from Harm*, was published in 1993. The document asked voluntary organisations (including churches) in England and Wales to safeguard the welfare of the children and young people in their charge by considering the issues raised by each of the following statements of principle and then to review their policy and practice in the light of their circumstances. *Safe & Sound* contains the Salvation Army UK Territory with the Republic of Ireland's child protection policies and procedures, based on the guidelines.

1. Adopt a policy statement on safeguarding the welfare of children.
2. Plan the work of the organisation so as to minimise situations where the abuse of children may occur.
3. Introduce a system whereby children may appeal to an independent person.
4. Apply agreed procedures for protecting children to all paid staff and volunteers.
5. Give all paid staff and volunteers clear roles.
6. Use supervision as a means of protecting children.
7. Treat all would-be paid staff and volunteers as job applicants for any position involving contact with children.
8. Obtain at least one reference from a person who has experience of the applicant's paid work or volunteering with children.
9. Explore all applicants' experience of working, or contact with children in an interview before appointment.
10. Find out whether an applicant has any conviction for criminal offences against children.
11. Make paid and voluntary appointments conditional on the successful completion of a probationary period.
12. Issue guidelines on how to deal with the disclosure or discovery of abuse.
13. Train paid staff and volunteers, their line managers or supervisors, and policy makers in the recognition and prevention of child abuse.

Safe & Sound seeks to implement the Home Office guidelines and to work within other relevant child safety legislation in order to provide a care and protection framework for The Salvation Army. Good practice and the safeguarding of all children and youth who come into contact with all Salvation Army programmes and activities are essential to our mission.

It is important that all leaders and helpers understand the rationale behind *Safe & Sound*.

All leaders must also attend a *Safe & Sound* training session before commencing work within a group. Also, everyone responsible for each group must have a current cleared police Criminal Records Bureau check carried out through The Salvation Army.

Although the 13 guidelines were written primarily for leaders working with unaccompanied children, they still apply to parent and toddler and babysong groups. It is important that these are adhered to in all situations.

Section 9 – *Safe & Sound*

Tasks

Look through the 13 guidelines and list those that you know are being adhered to in your group.

List ways in which children may be in vulnerable situations during your group.

List the ways in which you can regularly keep accountability between all leaders/helpers of a group.

May God bless you in this valuable ministry



Appendix

SAMPLE POLICY DOCUMENT FOR PARENT AND TODDLER GROUPS

USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

SAMPLE POLICY DOCUMENT FOR PARENT AND TODDLER GROUPS

WELCOME

The **[name of group]** Group want to ensure the safety of you and your children and at the same time want you to feel relaxed and comfortable. We have adopted a few statements that we feel will help us do this. Please take a minute to look through this folder and get to know us better.

ROUTINE

We try to have a bit of organisation to our chaos, so we aim to stick to a routine, as follows:

- The group runs from **[insert time]** on every **[insert day(s)]** in term- time only
- When you arrive please park your buggy in the area provided [give directions to this area], then sign in and pay. Fees are for first child and second child.
- We provide tea/coffee for parents/carers. We ask you to keep these out of the reach of the children.
- At **[insert time]** we tidy up and put the toys to one side, we ask the children to sit down with you in a circle and have a drink and biscuit; we follow this with singing time.
- If during the session you need to leave early please let us know. This is because of Fire Regulations.
- On the first Monday of the month for the first 15-20 minutes we have a Toddler Church Workshop, where we have a simple Bible story, singing time and a craft.

Please feel free to join in all activities (remembering that you are responsible for your child at all times).

At the end of the session we would ask your help in stacking some chairs and helping to put the toys away. We also appreciate new ideas from parents.

If you feel unsure of anything, please ask someone – we don't bite!

We hope you enjoy your time with us.

Please remember that your child and your possessions are your responsibility at all times.

Do not leave your children in the care of another parent without full knowledge and agreement of the group leader.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN (Formerly Child Protection)

It is the ethos of our group to provide a safe and stimulating environment for all who attend. Guidelines of The Salvation Army's Safe & Sound policy are included in this document and the complete *Safe & Sound* document can be seen on request.

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

We do encourage children to be kind to each other at all times and would ask for your help in ensuring that your child's behaviour does not affect the other children's enjoyment of the group.

It is not our position to question individual parenting skills.

Every adult and child in this group is entitled to an environment that promotes dignity and respect for all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated. If any inappropriate behaviour is observed within this group it will be challenged and support offered, if required.

Biting, scratching, pinching and hitting – Why my child does these things

Biting, scratching, pinching and hitting are very common in children. The child may be feeling angry or frustrated because they do not have the words to say how they feel and they can react by biting. Also, at this stage, they are only starting to learn to share. Sharing is hard to learn and needs lots of practice.

What can we do?

- Don't laugh
- Don't bite back
- Don't chat or gossip with others about it in front of them
- Don't overreact
- Keep calm
- Get eye contact with your child
- Say, 'No, biting hurts,' firmly, but without shouting
- Comfort the child who has been bitten
- Help your child say sorry – this might be giving the other child a cuddle, but don't force it
- Watch your child closely, so that you can distract or interrupt behaviour that may lead to biting
- Give them lots of praise for all the little things they do.

Be brave, and allow your child to mix with other children. Remember – these types of behaviour are no one's fault. Let the child know it's the behaviour that is not liked, not the child, and never be afraid to seek help.

ADMISSIONS

To help ensure the safety of your child whilst at our session, we reserve the right to limit the number of people in the room at any one session. If the group continually exceeds the limit, anyone who would like to attend on a regular basis after this number will be added to a waiting list. We like to see you every week and may telephone you if we don't see you for a few weeks, just to check that all is well.

CONFIDENTIALITY

We adhere to the Data Protection Act 1998. Any personal information you give to the group will be kept in our registration folder and will be removed from the venue when we are closed.

The information you provide will only be made available to the leaders of the group or if required by external authorities in the case of an emergency. The information supplied will not be used for any other purpose than that stated.

We will ask your permission before taking any photographs as per registration form.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Our group is committed to valuing diversity by providing equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children and families.

We aim to provide a secure environment in which all our children can flourish and in which all contributions are valued. We hope that there is an inclusion thread that runs through all of the activities of the group.

FOOD AND DRINK

This group regards snack time as an important part of the group's session. Eating represents a social time for children and adults.

Please ensure your group organisers are aware of any allergies you or your child may have.

Please, no sweets/food during session. If it gets into toys and we are not aware of this, it makes toys messy and a breeding ground for germs/tummy upsets. We understand babies need feeding; if your toddler needs food please sit them with you until they have finished.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Our group believes that children and parents are entitled to expect courtesy and careful attention to their needs and wishes.

We welcome suggestions on how to improve our group and will give prompt and serious attention to any concerns about the running of the group.

Please let us know of any concerns or comments you have.

EQUIPMENT AND RESOURCES

We believe that high-quality early years care and education is promoted by providing children with safe, clean, attractive, developmentally appropriate resources, toys and equipment. We aim to provide the children at our group with resources and equipment that help to consolidate and extend their knowledge, skills, interests and aptitudes. We carry out regular risk assessments of our venue and equipment.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

This group believes that the health and safety of the children is of paramount importance.

We aim to make our group a safe and healthy place for all those who attend.

We inform those who attend of health and safety issues to minimise the hazards and risks to enable the children to thrive in a healthy and safe environment.

We carry out regular risk assessments of this venue and we have public liability insurance – a copy of which we keep on the premises.

SAFETY GUIDELINES

Don't forget hot drinks can scald – never leave your hot drinks within easy reach of babies or toddlers. 20 minutes after a drink is made it can still cause severe burns to a child.

Smoking is not allowed at any time on the premises.

Please ensure you have read the fire procedures for the hall. We will have a fire drill at least once per term. It is our aim to do this in a non-threatening way so as not to frighten the children.

Please ensure any bags and handbags are secure and not accessible to little fingers. There are many new and exciting items to explore in a bag that are not always suitable for a child.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS/DISABILITY

We provide an environment in which all children are supported to reach their full potential. Our aim is to include all children into our group by ensuring that our physical environment and resources are, as far as possible, suitable for children with disabilities.

We will try to ensure the privacy of children with SEN/disabilities when intimate care is being provided.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The aim of our group is to support parents as their child's first and most important educators by involving them in their children's education and in the full life of the group. We also aim to support parents in their continuing education and personal development.

FIRE DRILL AND EVACUATION PROCEDURE

Anyone discovering a fire or other hazard should immediately raise the alarm to the person in charge and notify them of the seat of the fire. The building should be evacuated as quickly as possible to the designated assembly area which is **[insert location of assembly point]**.

The fire drill is as follows:

- Should the fire alarm sound or a fire be found the alarm is to be raised by the acknowledging member of staff.
- All staff to lead the children and parents out through the nearest fire exit. The fire exits are situated at:
[List all fire exits]
- Person in charge to collect attendance list and notify fire service.
- Person in charge will check all rooms, eg toilets, kitchen and adjoining rooms where possible before leaving the building themselves. This should only be carried out if there is no risk to personal safety.
- Everyone to meet at the designated assembly point as above.
- A head count will be carried out by person in charge.
- The details will be entered into the Fire Log in the group folder.

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS CAN BE FOUND•

[List locations of all fire extinguishers]

Fire should only be tackled if there is no risk to personal safety.

BABY CHANGING RULES

- Never leave your baby unattended
- Dispose of your nappy in the sangenic nappy disposal system
- Please wipe the mat after you have finished

By following these simple rules, you will be keeping your baby safe.

PHOTOGRAPHY

No photographs will be taken at our baby and toddler group without written consent from the adults via the registration form.

PLAY ACTIVITIES

We aim to offer a full range of play activities to meet the needs of all babies and toddlers attending the group.

SICK CHILDREN

We love to share, but if your child is ill, please don't share it here!

The most important rule to remember here is HAVE FUN!

USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

- **Netmums** is a UK-based family of local websites set up and run by mothers. It includes a discussion forum and provides support and advice for parents on a national level. www.netmums.com
- **Pre-School Learning Alliance** is a leading early years charity and is a good reference regarding play and development. www.pre-school.org.uk/
- **Ci2eye** – Christian Initiatives in Early Years Education is a network providing support, resources and vision for all working with early years children. www.ci2eye.co.uk
- **CPAS** – Publishes church resources developing local church leaders with courses, books and resources to equip for mission.
- **SANDS** (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society) and **Cruse** Bereavement Care offer one-to-one bereavement counselling for any bereaved person. www.uk-sands.org and www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk
- **Tamba** The Twins and Multiple Births Association is a charity set up by parents of twins, triplets and higher multiples and interested professionals. www.tamba.org.uk
- **Christian Child Care Forum** operates by bringing its constituency of organisations, individuals and families together with issues of concern through its Annual Forum, its newsletter and various working groups. CCCF recommends Keith White's book *The Growth of Love*. www.christianchildcareforum.org.uk
- **National Family and Parenting Institute** champions families. They draw on research and evidence to influence policy and offer practical solutions to make society more family friendly. www.familyandparenting.org/
- **Godly Play** is a creative and imaginative approach to Christian nurture. It can be used in a variety of settings including churches, schools, hospitals, care homes for the elderly. It invites listeners into stories and encourages them to connect the stories with personal experience. Rev Peter Privett is the Godly PLAY UK consultant and speaker. www.godlyplay.org.uk/
- **Rev Ronni Lamont** is a freelance writer and speaker with emphasis on children's spirituality. www.creativespirit.lamonts.org.uk/
- **Children's Ministry** holds an annual conference in Eastbourne. They have a useful website for networking and resources. www.familyministry.co.uk/

The Salvation Army
Adult and Family Ministries
101 Newington Causeway
London SE1 6BN

Telephone: 020 7367 4956
Email: afm@salvationarmy.org.uk
Web: www.salvationarmy.org.uk/afm