

**For further assistance or information, please contact;**

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# So you want to start a Toddler Group?

## Some useful questions...



Updated 2017



The Church of England  
in Essex and East London  
Diocese of Chelmsford

Adapted by Jo Gilks, Early Years Adviser, Diocese of Chelmsford, from original written by Ellie Wilson, Under 5's Adviser, Diocese of Wakefield

**This leaflet is designed to help you with planning and discussions when starting a toddler group.**

**There are different questions to ask yourselves as leaders and those who will be involved, to help you think about all aspects of running a toddler group.**

**You do not have to answer all the questions in one go but keep coming back to them,**

**Use them as a guide to help you think and discuss your groups needs.**

## **The longer term...**

How will you ensure the groups future?

- Advertising
- Volunteers
- Finances
- Support
- Ideas
- Equipment

*It is best to do things as a team so things do not depend upon any one person.*

## **Sparrows Early Years Network**

Linking with existing early years workers (pre-school, nursery, toddler groups & Sunday groups) in Chelmsford Diocese Church of England churches & schools. Sharing ideas and supporting each other.

## **Useful websites...**

### **Ideas**

[www.saltshaker.org.uk](http://www.saltshaker.org.uk)                      [www.themothersunion.org](http://www.themothersunion.org)  
[www.faithinhomes.org.uk](http://www.faithinhomes.org.uk)                      [www.going4growth.org.uk](http://www.going4growth.org.uk)  
[www.1277.org.uk](http://www.1277.org.uk)                      [www.engagetoday.org.uk/playtime](http://www.engagetoday.org.uk/playtime)  
[www.messychurch.org.uk](http://www.messychurch.org.uk)                      [www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk](http://www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk)

### **Resources**

[www.123smartkids.co.uk](http://www.123smartkids.co.uk)                      [www.eden.co.uk](http://www.eden.co.uk)  
[www.sbs-educational.co.uk](http://www.sbs-educational.co.uk)                      [www.tts-group.co.uk](http://www.tts-group.co.uk)  
[www.bakerross.co.uk](http://www.bakerross.co.uk)

## Connections

Will you be able to link with any other groups in the area, local services or professionals who could offer more to the group?

- Church
- Mother's Union groups
- Local schools, nurseries, or play groups
- Library
- Community centre
- Health Visitors or Doctor's Surgery
- Local support groups like National Childbirth Trust or La Leche
- Programmes like Book Start or Sure Start

## Back up and Support

- ? What support do you have?
- ? Has anyone in the congregation had similar experience?
- ? Are you on any prayer lists as individuals and as a group, and for the children and their carers?
- ? Have you spoken to our Early Years Adviser or Children & Families Adviser?
- ? Have you joined 1277 Make them Count?

## Why?

Why do you want to open a group?

- ? Is there a need?
- ? Are there any other groups nearby?
- ? Is there anything similar locally?

## Aims and Objectives

- ? What is the aim of the group?
- ? Who is it for?
- ? What ages of children?
- ? Will there be a limit to the number of children?
- ? What will the children/carers gain?
- ? Do you have the support of the P.C.C and do they share your vision, how does your vision align with the churches strategy/plan?
- ? Have you read the *Toddler Group Matters* research recommendations?

## Finance

How will the group be funded?

- ? P.C.C, a start up grant or alternative funding?
- ? Will you charge or ask for donations?
- ? If charging is it per child, per family or group?
- ? Who will be responsible for monies; P.C.C. Treasurer or the group?
- ? Will you need an annual set of accounts?

## Administration

Who will be responsible for other administrative tasks?

- Writing and maintaining an inventory
- Writing and maintaining a welcome sheet or leaflet
- Notices and distribution of information
- Initial registration of each child's personal information and needs and maintenance of records
- A record of any special or medical needs and communicate this to appropriate leaders
- Weekly registration on arrival at group
- Where will records be kept?

Advertising

- Where and how will you advertise the new group
  - Local shops
  - Library
  - Church newsletter
  - School newsletter
  - Doctors surgery
  - Health visitor
  - Preschool or nursery

How will you communicate church events and services?

## Toys

When thinking about toys, look for ones that have some connection to the church building or the Bible.

Include things that can inspire children's imagination and can take some inspiration from what they see and hear around them.

- ? Does what you do and provide say "we value you"?
- ? Are the toys clean and well maintained?
- ? Are there any toys that enable children to encounter God or to nurture prayer and spirituality?

Include toys, books and material for dressing up. It is also important to include items from nature or made of natural materials not just plastic.

Perhaps choose a theme for a term with a variety of things for children to play with and explore?

- Baptism
- Major festivals like Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Harvest, All Saints Day, Remembrance Day, Advent Christmas
- Old Testament stories like Creation, Noah, Jonah, Moses
- Parables
- New Testament stories about Jesus

Include a variety of toys, jigsaws, material for dress up, figures, storybooks and bibles.

Check out ***Christian toddler play baskets*** factsheet.

## Session Structure

- ? Will it be more of a toddler service, a time to play and chat or a combination?
- ? How will it be distinctly Christian and Faith based?
- ? Have you read the Toddler Group Matters research recommendations on being distinctively Christian?
- ? What will happen during the session?
  - Free play with a selection of toys
  - Activities
  - Craft
  - Songs
  - Story
  - Prayers
  - RefreshmentsCheck out ***Why Play?*** leaflet
- ? How long will the session last?
- ? What time of day?  
*Consider local school and nursery starting and finishing times*
- ? What rules will you have and how will they be communicated?
- ? What strategies will you use for dealing with difficult behaviour?
- ? Do you have appropriate equipment, toys, books, craft materials and toileting aids? Are they clean,

## Health and Safety

- ? Is there an existing Child Protection policy?
- ? Do leaders need a DBS or have they already been checked? (Is it in date?)
- ? Do you have adequate insurance?  
*If there is an existing policy, check it covers your group and its activities?*
- ? Are any of the leaders a qualified first aider?  
*Will they always be present or do more leaders need training?*
- ? Do you have an 'in date' first aid kit?
- ? Do you have an accident reporting book?
- ? Is there anywhere to record incidents?
- ? Do you have a complaints procedure?
- ? What are the fire procedures and are there adequate safety measures?
- ? Risk Assessments, who will complete them?  
Things to consider;
  - Telephone access for emergencies
  - Toilet area
  - Kitchen
  - Entrance/Exit
  - Main room to be used
  - Activities
  - People

## Suitability of Area

- ? Where are you going to hold the group?
  - In a hall, in Church, rooms within it or somewhere else?
- ? How many rooms are going to be used?
  - Are they safe and suitable?
- ? How will they be set out to incorporate safe areas?
- ? Are the toilets accessible?
  - Do you need potties, trainer seats or steps?
- ? What facilities are there for changing nappies?
- ? Are there suitable hand washing facilities?
  - How hot is the water?
  - Can children reach the taps?
- ? Is there enough safe storage for all the toys and equipment?
- ? Is there a designated area for the storage of prams?
- ? If preparing refreshments, are there suitable facilities?
  - Are they clean, safe and hygienic?

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Volunteers

- ? How will you recruit people to help
- ? How will they be supported
- ? How will you thank them
- ? What skills do people already have, do you need to arrange further training?
- ? How will roles be delegated, weekly, termly or permanently?

### Some tasks to think about-

- Cleaning and maintenance of toys and equipment
  - Regular safety checks
  - Administration
  - Budgeting and finance
  - Health and Safety issues like first aid and fire safety
  - Session planning
  - Preparation
  - Refreshments
- ? What responsibility will the parents or carers have?
    - Will you encourage them to become involved?