



GET SET!

Behind the Scenes



3.1 Spreading the Word

As with any group, an essential part of creating a welcoming and inviting parent and toddler group is to make sure that people know you are there.

Communicating clearly, thoughtfully and consistently on different platforms and using different media makes people feel informed and reassured - even before they have walked through the door of your building. It is a way of showing the love of God right from the word go!

3.1.1 Marketing and social media

Ensure you use warm friendly language as this may be the first contact someone has with your group, so you want it to reflect the atmosphere and welcome they will receive in person.

Essential info

Details include:

- Group name, day, time and location.
- Age range and who the group is for.
- What to expect at the group (free play, craft, songs, snack, faith element, story)
- Booking information
- Contact details.

Church-based

See Sections 4.1 and 5.4

When advertising your parent and toddler group, don't shy away from the faith element. Families attending need to know what to expect. This section is entitled spreading the word - yes, we want to spread the news of your brilliant group, but we also want to spread the good news of Jesus Christ



through our relationships and the embodiment of God's love, and through stories, songs, crafts and other activities.

Posters and leaflets

See Section 3.3.2

Handing out leaflets is still a powerful way of reaching families in your community.

- Make sure posters are colourful, bright and eye-catching.
- Keep designs simple and easy to read.
- If possible, include photos of your group - with consent.
- At the end of your sessions, make sure there are leaflets available for people to take and give away.

Social media

This is an accessible and great way to build awareness, community and presence. If your expression doesn't already have a social media account, it would be good to set one up with the appropriate help. See links below for guidance on taking and presenting images for social media.

You could set up a dedicated private page for your parent and toddler group, to regularly share specific and relevant information. This could include updates, reminders and photos - with consent, celebrations, stories, milestones and special events.

It may also be helpful to post a walk-through video or set of photos of the group set-up. This would mean that anyone new can see what the group looks like before they come and may also support those with additional needs in accessing the group.

Consideration needs to be given to:

- who will be posting content and on what social media platform
- verifying consent has been given for images
- ensuring the Social Media Policy has been followed
- checking there will be no risks, eg reputational damage or safeguarding breach

Useful links

- **Guidance on protecting your setting's images from AI manipulation and abuse** (saferinternet.org.uk)
- ***Guidance on filming and photography*** (OurHub)



- **Social Media Policy** for guidance on setting up a social media account and usage (OurHub)

3.1.2 Who to connect with

Strong local relationships will help reach those in the community who need your group most, for example:

- Health visitors and GP surgeries
- Social services and family support workers
- Local nurseries and schools
- Local council family hubs

Once families are attending your group, one of the best ways of connecting and sharing is through word of mouth. Families who have attended your group and have positive, welcoming experiences will go and share with others. These relationships are key in building the community and encouraging more people to come along.

3.1.3 Where to promote

Think about where families, parents and carers are already spending their time and find a way to spread the word there:

- Libraries, swimming pools and community hubs
- Noticeboards at nurseries, supermarkets, community areas, cafés and play parks
- Local online parenting groups

3.1.4 Sharing real stories

Lived experience is one of the most powerful tools, so it is worth sharing these stories, with consent, on social media or leaflets:

- Photos/testimonials/quotes from families, carers and your team.
- The difference the group has made in the community.

Consent to take photographs and to share on social media will also be needed. **Image Consent** forms are available on OurHub. Also, consider changing names to protect privacy.



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3.2 Budgeting and Fundraising

Starting a parent and toddler group within a church requires thoughtful planning around budgeting and fundraising. The aim is not to generate profit, but to ensure sustainability, accessibility, and alignment with the church's mission.

3.2.1 Budgeting with purpose

Before making financial decisions, it is important to discuss with your corps leader and/or finance team about how the group will be funded. Some churches choose to subsidise parent and toddler groups as part of their ministry, meaning the group may not need to fully cover its costs. Clarifying this early will help guide decisions about spending, fees, and fundraising expectations.

3.2.2 Understanding your costs

A clear budget should distinguish between start-up and ongoing costs.

Start-up costs

These include essential items needed to begin the group, such as:

- Toys - check for appropriate safety marks
- Mats
- Tables and chairs suitable for smaller children
- Highchairs and bouncy chairs
- Tuff trays
- Storage boxes
- Safety equipment, eg door or stair gates, lidded travel mugs and baby cups
- Other basic kitchen equipment, eg plastic bowls, plates, spoons



Ongoing costs

This ensures the group remains welcoming and sustainable. These typically include:

- Refreshments
- Craft materials
- Replacement toys
- Contribution to overheads - the contribution made to the corps towards use of the building
- Salaries, expenses, training costs - include small thank you gestures for volunteers as well - see ***Volunteers Management Manual*** (OurHub)
- Celebrating special occasions, eg birthdays, Christmas, Easter, end of term **See Section 5.3**

When planning, practise good stewardship by buying only what is necessary at the start. Consider sourcing second-hand items through charity shops, local marketplaces, nurseries, or donations from parents.

Talk with your corps leader / finance team to see if there are any funds available within the corps that can be used to help with set-up costs. For new mission initiatives, support may also be available through small grants from divisional headquarters or local organisations, and advice can be obtained from the territorial community engagement lead (TCEL) for your division.

TIP: Contact the manager of your local Salvation Army-run or SATCOL charity shop to see if they can help.

Asset inventory

Maintain an asset inventory of your purchases for insurance purposes. All toys should be insured on a 'new-for-old' basis and covered under the corps' insured content through SAGIC.

Useful link

- **BA06 *Care of Monies, Moveable Assets* Policy**

3.2.3 Setting accessible income

The income for most parent and toddler groups comes from small weekly contributions. Common approaches include:

- A suggested donation, eg £1 per child or £3 per family, based on what is typical locally.



- A 'pay-what-you-can' model, which often ensures inclusivity and balances out overall.
- Optional contributions for snacks.

The priority should always be accessibility. Avoid any system that could exclude families in financial difficulty. Encouraging regular attendance and building relationships is more important than maximising income.

3.2.4 Fundraising thoughtfully

Always refer to the **Fundraising** section on OurHub to ensure you are working to the most up-to-date guidance.

While some parent and toddler groups gradually build modest reserves, fundraising can help with start-up costs or developments. However, it should never feel like a burden or distract from the group's main purpose.

Before organising fundraising, consider:

- Is it essential, or simply enhancing the offer?
- Could the need be met by corps members or grants instead?

Fundraising should be low-pressure, inclusive, and community-focused.

Fundraising ideas

Effective ideas include:

- Weekly donation jar - a simple, reliable and inclusive option.
- Corps support - one-off offerings or donation of specific goods from the congregation.
- Seasonal events - simple Christmas or summer celebrations with small ticket costs.
- Nearly-new sales - practical, popular and outreach-friendly.
- Coffee mornings or cake sales - easy to organise and sociable, creating space for relationships with corps congregations and families attending the group.

These activities not only raise funds but also build community and relationships. However, it is important to be realistic about the time and energy required to do them. Over-committing to events can lead to volunteer burnout, so a simple plan, such as weekly giving alongside one or two events per year, is often sufficient.

Useful link

- [Community, membership and events page](#) (OurHub)



Communicating the purpose

Clear communication around any fundraising is important. When people understand how their donations support families and create a welcoming environment, they are more likely to give generously. Fundraising should always reflect corps values of generosity, inclusion and integrity.

3.2.5 Fundraising for others

If the group is self-financing, then there may be opportunity to fundraise for other good causes.

The Family Ministries Department encourages parent and toddler groups to fundraise for the Helping-Hand Appeal, which each year supports an international Salvation Army project responding to poverty and injustice. This is an excellent way for groups to learn something about the worldwide Salvation Army, and resources, including a Jump IN! session, are provided to support this.

Fundraising for local projects, or concerns that are important to members of the group, should be discussed with the corps leader.

Useful links

- **Helping-Hand Appeal** (salvationist.org.uk)
- **Jump IN!** (salvationist.org.uk)
- **Fundraising guidance** (OurHub)

3.2.6 Final thoughts

A healthy parent and toddler group budget balances faith, stewardship and hospitality. The guiding question should always be:

- Are our financial decisions helping us create a warm, welcoming and accessible space for every family?

If the answer is yes, then your budgeting and fundraising are fulfilling their purpose.





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3.3 Administrative Essentials

When planning a parent and toddler group, it's natural to focus first on creating a welcoming atmosphere - choosing toys, arranging the space and deciding on refreshments. However, it's equally important to ensure that the group is safe and well organised behind the scenes. When this happens, it enables the group to offer genuine care and hospitality, reflecting God's love in practical ways.

To help do this, it is important to consider three key areas:

- What information we need from attending families.
- What information families need from us.
- What financial records and compliance documentation is required by The Salvation Army. See Sections 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6

3.3.1 Information to collect

Registering a child

See Section 3.6.2 and Appendix 3

It is important to know something about the people who attend the group. We should only collect and store essential personal data and other information needed to run the group, such as:

- Child's full name and date of birth.
- Parent or carer's name, address and contact details.
- Details of any allergies, medical needs or additional support requirements.
- Preferred method of communication, eg email or phone

Other sensitive information - related to ethnicity or religious belief, for example - may be useful to have but is not usually essential. You should only collect this data if you feel it is necessary to the provision of service, or if there is another reason for collecting it (for example, if you are working



under contract to a local authority to provide a service and they require this information from you).

Consent to take photographs and to share on social media will also be needed. **Image consent** forms are available on OurHub. Also, consider changing names to protect privacy.

A simple registration form enables the gathering of all the information required. This can be done using a printed form, **see Appendix 3**, or using an electronic method such as **ChurchSuite**. **See Section 3.4.3**

The registration form should also include a short data protection notice, to tell parents and carers how their personal data will be used and why.

It is helpful if all registration forms are renewed each September to ensure all information is up to date. Old forms should be securely disposed of according to the Retention Policy.

Useful link

- ***Records Retention and Disposal Schedule*** (OurHub)

3.3.2 Information to provide

People will want to know specific details about the parent and toddler group - see information to include below. This information can be included in a simple leaflet, **see Appendix 4**, and in places where the group is advertised. **See Section 3.1**

Appendices 5 and 6 have an editable *Expectations for Parent and toddler Groups* document and an example.

Information leaflet

Information to include:

- Who the group leaders are and how to identify them.
- How the session runs and what activities are available.
- Details of session payment/donation - what this includes and how to pay.
- Contact details.
- Data protection and photography policies.
- The name of the safeguarding and the deputy safeguarding lead.
- Expectations for behaviour, such as:
 - ☐ Parents and carers being responsible for their own children
 - ☐ Nappy changing in designated area



It is very important that a group information leaflet should also include a clear statement that the group is church-based, and therefore will include Christian songs, prayers and Bible stories, and that invitations will be shared to other church events.

Welcome packs

A welcome pack is an excellent way of showing hospitality to new members. If you choose to provide one it can be a helpful way to share key further information, resources and some small gifts. To manage costs, you may wish to give this on their second visit rather than immediately.

Possible contents include:

- Registration form
- Welcome card/leaflet
- Information about other activities, eg Messy Church, welcome spaces and coffee mornings, special interest groups and worship services
- Information about Dedication/Thanksgiving services, and the *Cradle Roll*
- A small treat for the child such as a healthy snack pack
- A simple treat for the parent or carer, eg hot chocolate sachet, tea bag, or tissues





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3.4 Finance Compliance Documents

These documents are required by The Salvation Army. Your field finance team and audit team, corps finance team and corps leader will be able to help you.

It is important that you keep a good record of all income paid to you and a record of any outstanding payments due from parents.

Always refer to the **Finance** section on OurHub to ensure you are working to the most up-to-date guidance.

All documentation containing sensitive or personal data, eg card data, should be kept in a locked cupboard or filing cabinet and only accessed by managers for the purpose of running the group. Records kept on computer systems should be access controlled by password or saved to a secure shared drive with access based on role.

The following financial procedures are mandatory and records need to be kept, to comply with the audit process.

3.4.1 Section codes

A new parent and toddler group, or one being re-started, requires the allocation of a new section code, GM1, to ensure income and expenditure are assigned to the group correctly. If more than one session is run per week, all groups can be assigned to GM1 which will enable corps leadership to have full visibility of the cost of running the groups.

3.4.2 Subscriptions/donations

Any subscription or suggested donation should be clearly stated on posters/advertisements and communicated to parents and carers at the point of registration.



3.4.3 Sectional registers and alternatives

See Appendix 7

A *Sectional Register* (available from **Salvationist Publishing and Supplies** - stock number 60920) should be maintained to record any amounts paid or donated. Distinction should also be made where monies are paid by cash or card. Ensure any card data collected is kept securely.

Alternatively, some groups use the *Session Registration* form to record any amounts paid or donated, filing it with the *Safeguarding Leaders in Attendance* forms. Where a family attends but does not pay, their attendance should still be recorded, with a clear distinction that no payment was received. These adapted forms are acceptable, as long as they contain records of attendance and monies paid.

However, as printed registration sheets are more prone to damage or loss, this may make reconciliation and audit verification more difficult. Maintaining a consistent, durable record helps reduce the risk of error or misappropriation.

Ensure all data from the *Sectional Registers* and the *Session Registration* form are kept safe at all times, always locked away and destroyed safely when no longer needed.

3.4.4 Reconciliation

The *Sectional Register* (or *Session Registration* form - see above) should be totalled for each session and reconciled to the cash collected. While one individual may maintain the register, this should be reviewed by the group leader for accountability - providing oversight and evidence the segregation of duties.

3.4.5 Cash handling expectations

Cash should be transferred to the corps finance team along with an income slip detailing the session date, total funds, and the initials of both the individual counting the money and the group leader. The register itself can act as the primary record if completed clearly and accurately.

3.4.6 Expenditure

All expenditure should be processed through the corps leader or corps finance team, in line with local arrangements. Where petty cash or reimbursement are used, receipts must be retained, legible, and clearly



itemised with the section code. This is also true for expenditure on purchase cards or with an expenses claim.

Further guidance

- Expenses Complete Guidance (OurHub)

3.4.7 Accounting and monitoring

All income and expenditure should be recorded against the relevant parent and toddler group section code GM1 in the Accounting System. This is the responsibility of the corps finance team.

The field finance team distributes the corps monthly reports to the corps leaders. The parent and toddler group leader will need to contact the corps leaders or corps treasurer for a copy of the monthly reports, to enable reconciliation of income to the register and review of expenditure. Any discrepancies should be investigated promptly.

- Financial records should be retained in line with policy (current year plus six financial years).
- If further guidance is required over any financial matter, this is available from your regional finance team, via your corps leader / finance team.

Corps : XXX Section : GM1 Community Activity - Parent & Toddlers 1		Senior Corps Detailed Income and Expenditure From April 2025 to March 2026		Current Year To Date			March 2026
Account	Description	March 2026 Budget	Actual	Actual	Budget	Variance (adverse)	Budget
£		£	£	£	£	£	£
General Funds							
Income							
<i>Cartridge & Other Member Giving</i>							
11033	Personal/Cartridge Giving/Section Subscriptions	(71)	(450)	(1,550)	(850)	710	(7)
		(71)	(450)	(1,550)	(850)	710	(7)
<i>Other Income</i>							
11000	Donations & Gifts from the General Public	-	-	(1)	-	1	
		-	-	(1)	-	1	
Total Income		(71)	(450)	(1,551)	(850)	711	(7)
Expenditure							
<i>Officer & Employee Costs</i>							
		-	-	-	-	-	
<i>Other Expenditure</i>							
31000	Purchase of Furniture & Fittings (incl shop)	-	-	33	-	(33)	
35310	Household Provisions (excl food)	4	-	-	50	50	
33410	Teaching/Meeting Resource Materials	17	-	7	200	193	
35300	Food costs (zero rated purchases)	10	18	75	120	45	
35305	Food costs (standard rated purchases)	-	-	4	-	(4)	
39905	Incidentals	3	-	-	40	40	

Example of an *Income and Expenditure* form.





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3.5 Safe Mission Compliance Documents

See Section 4.2

It is advisable to consider health and safety in collaboration with corps leaders, as they will have oversight of risks in your specific building. It is also useful to ask members of your team to contribute as this allows for different perspectives and helps volunteers take ownership and responsibility during the group.

Always refer to the **Safe Mission** section on OurHub to ensure you are working to the most up-to-date guidance.

All documentation containing personal data, eg registration forms, should be kept in a locked cupboard or filing cabinet and only accessed by managers for the purpose of running the group. Records kept on computer systems should be access-controlled by password or saved to a secure shared drive with access based on role.

3.5.1 Risk Assessment

A risk assessment must be completed, covering factors such as toy safety and accessibility of hazards.

Useful links

- **Risk Assessment form** (OurHub)
- **Example of a Risk Assessment** (OurHub)
- **Children's outdoor play area and equipment checklist** (OurHub)
- **Vulnerable persons health and safety checklist** (OurHub)



3.5.2 Accident records

Accidents involving children must be assessed to determine whether they require reporting. Minor accidents to children should not be reported using The Salvation Army accident reporting system. Instead, keep a record locally and ensure the child's parent/guardian is informed.

Further guidance

- *Health and Safety Manual* page 13 (OurHub)

3.5.3 Recording incidents

See Sections 4.2.2 and 6.1

Health and safety incidents (events that caused or could have caused harm, including accidents, near misses, dangerous occurrences or occupational diseases) must be reported appropriately. If a paper form has been used, it is mandatory for the incident to be entered online as soon as possible.

Useful link

- *Incident reporting* (OurHub)

3.5.4 Volunteers

See Sections 2.3.3 and 3.5.5

Volunteers operate under the group leader's supervision and should be recruited as per the volunteer recruitment process, including references and criminal records background checks where required.

Leaders must ensure that volunteers watch the short video *Why is Health and Safety so Important?* to understand key health and safety behaviours within The Salvation Army.

Useful links

- *How to recruit volunteers* (OurHub)
- *Why is Health and Safety so Important?* video (OurHub)

For any questions concerning this section, please contact:
volunteering@salvationarmy.org.uk



3.5.5 Criminal record background checks

The group leader, and one other person who deputises in their absence, should be subject to a criminal record background check.

The level of criminal record will depend on where the individual is based, what they are doing and the level of interaction with the children.

England, Wales, Channel Islands and IOM - DBS Checks

- Parent and toddler leaders and deputies will require an Enhanced Child DBS check with the Children's Barred List
- Parent and toddler workers/volunteers will require an Enhanced with Barred list, Enhanced or no check at all depending on the level of interaction with children.

Useful link

- **Corps DBS Guidance - Children** - page 3 and 4 (scenarios E, F and H) (OurHub)

Scotland - Disclosure Scotland check

- All roles require membership in the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme.

Northern Ireland - Access NI check

- Parent and toddler leaders, deputies, volunteers and workers will require an Enhanced Access NI check with the Children's Barred List
- Parent and toddler kitchen helpers that have no interaction with the children do not require an Access NI.

Republic of Ireland - Garda Vetting checks

- Schedule 1 Section 7 and Schedule 2 Section 15 check

If there is a 'disclosure with content' (blemished disclosure), a *Risk Assessment Management Plan* will need to be used.

For any questions concerning this section, please contact:
DisclosuresDBS@salvationarmy.org.uk





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3.6 Safeguarding Compliance Documents

See Section 4.2.3

Safeguarding is integral to all we do and is everyone's responsibility.

Always refer to the **Safeguarding** section on OurHub to ensure you are working to the most up-to-date guidance.

All documentation containing sensitive, data eg registration forms, should be kept in a locked cupboard or filing cabinet and only accessed by managers for the purpose of running the group. Records kept on computer systems should be access-controlled by password or saved to a secure shared drive with access based on role.

3.6.1 Safeguarding training

Everyone who helps the parent and toddler group should complete the *Safeguarding for Everyone* training to support recognising, responding, recording and reporting concerns. All leaders must complete *Safeguarding for Leaders* training and work closely with the safeguarding leads.

Useful links

- **Safeguarding for Everyone** (Salvationist.org.uk)
- **Safeguarding for leaders** (OurHub)

3.6.2 Safeguarding the group

Safeguarding the group is about creating a safe, caring and well-managed space where children, families, leaders and volunteers know what to do if a concern arises.

- A named safeguarding lead must be displayed at sessions.



- There should be a clear reporting route for concerns.
- After each session, leaders must complete the *Session Recording Sheet - Leaders in Attendance* note any incidents or concerns and share these with the safeguarding lead promptly. See Sections 3.4.3 and 3.6.3.
- *Safe and Sound Procedures* must always be followed.
- Establish appropriate ratios for supervising the group.
- Clarify parent responsibilities and leader responsibilities. See Appendices 5 and 6.

3.6.3 Attendance and welfare

The following forms must be kept, securely managed, and safely destroyed, in line with the retention schedule.

Useful link

- *Records Retention and Disposal Schedule* (OurHub)

Registration form

See Section 3.3.1 and Appendix 3

This is the essential information taken when registering a child.

Session Recording Sheet - Leaders in Attendance

See 3.6.2

A *Session Recording Sheet - Leaders in Attendance* should be completed each week. These are printed and filed indefinitely.

Useful links

- *Leaders in attendance session* (OurHub)
- *Safeguarding* (OurHub)



Session Registration form

See Appendix 7

Parents and carers sign a *Session Registration* form when they arrive for a session. It is essential for health and safety and safeguarding. This also serves as a record for fire/emergency purposes as they state who is on the premises. These forms also help leaders notice when a family has been absent for some time, allowing for appropriate follow-up or pastoral care.

The *Session Registration* form will need to be managed and not left unattended at any point. Ensure that the form does not include excessive or non-essential data like phone numbers or addresses; if it does, it will need to be securely managed to ensure privacy. The form should be locked away after use and safely destroyed when no longer needed.

These forms will need to comply with the Retention Policy. See above.

3.6.4 Support

For further information or support regarding all areas of safeguarding, please contact your corps safeguarding lead / corps leader, or divisional safeguarding officer. The *Safeguarding Contacts* poster in your corps should contain all the contact details for your area.

Useful link

- [Safeguarding poster \(OurHub\)](#)

3.6.5 Safeguarding concerns

We need to recognise, respond, record and report anything that might make people feel uncomfortable or unsafe. This includes behaviour from other parents and volunteers.

Any safeguarding concerns should be reported to the safeguarding lead, or, if this is not possible, use the details on the *Safeguarding Contacts* poster in your corps which should contain all the contact details for your area. See above.

