



## Vincentian Coordinator Role Description

### Introduction

The St. Vincent de Paul Society (SVP) in England and Wales runs apostolic programmes for young people in primary schools, secondary schools, colleges, universities and parishes. These apostolates are intended to be led by the young people and for the young people. However, all groups under 18 years of age need at least one adult supervisor/mentor – especially during the set-up process. This person is the main point of contact between the young people in the group, our Central Council Presidents via our Young Vincentians Development Officers (YVDO), and the National Office Youth Department throughout the year. This is the purpose and role of the Vincentian Coordinator (VC). Without a VC, groups fall apart for lack of support. Looking at it in a different way, young people flourish in their Vincentian groups by benefitting from the living faith and charitable example of the VC. They are an essential and highly valued part of the SVP family, who encourage and inspire the nurturing of faith among the young people, and magnify the possibilities of the young people implementing charitable works in a Vincentian spirit. With the exception of parish-based 1833 conferences (see below), there can be more than one VC per group, although there must still be one main contact.

## The 4 Apostolates of the Young Vincentians

### Mini Vinnies: 7–11 years old

Mini Vinnies are the youngest members of the SVP family they gather and pray together and talk about those around them who need help and they think of ways they can help those people. In primary schools, meetings are once a week or every two weeks, usually during lunchtimes or after school.

In parishes, meeting (usually) weekly, either after Mass or in the early evening.

## **Youth SVP: 11-14 years old**

In secondary schools and parishes. Meetings take place as frequently as once a week or as infrequently as every four weeks, depending on the availability and prioritisation of the young people concerning their academic and sporting routines. In schools, groups meet usually during lunchtimes or after school, and in parishes, groups often meet as part of a youth group initiative. Groups can choose to alternate between their meetings with spiritual input and their voluntary activities, or could decide to have combined sessions which contain both.

## **B-Attitude : 14-18 years old**

Works exactly the same as Youth SVP with the same level and kind of commitment.

The young people themselves should identify and react to the needs in their local community, work closely with their Vincentian Coordinator and embrace more fully their role in their group. At this stage, the members are more capable of forming 'working relationships' with their local adult SVP Conferences. Printed spiritual resources are provided for the development of Youth SVP members' faith.

## **SVP Young Adults including SVP 1833: 18-35 years old.**

SVP 1833 operates within university chaplaincies and/or Catholic Societies. Meetings and voluntary activity happen weekly or as a termly project, and during times which don't conflict with studies or exam periods.

SVP Young Adults operates for all non and post university young adults and runs through parishes.

1833 and SVP Young Adults conferences do not need an adult supervisor, because the elected President is 18+ years old and embraces the tasks of the VC as part of his/her presidency role.

However, with university conferences, support from the Chaplain helps maintain momentum and acts as an advisory service helping members find appropriate charitable activities

## The Vincentian Coordinator

- Should not have any convictions, cautions, reprimands or final warnings that are not “protected” as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (as amended);
- Has never been accused of inappropriate conduct within an employed or voluntary capacity;
- Has never been the subject of an investigation into a concern about any child in his/her care or investigated under adult protection safeguarding procedures;
- Is in possession of a DBS that is valid according to the Organisation’s Safeguarding policy;
- Has, or will be trained in child protection safeguarding through the Organisation within the last 2 years, and thereafter refreshed every 2 years;
- Has provided 2 references to the Organisation that have been taken up and the Head Teacher, Parish Youth Minister, priest or SVP adult conference president is satisfied that they not only meet our Safeguarding policy, but also attest to the suitability of the applicant to the role.

In all our Young Vincentians groups, young people can really have a say and make decisions about how they can help people in their community. The VC should help make this happen, and should support the children in their individual and collective growth and formation in the process. Someone from the St Vincent de Paul Society local Conference can assist and support the VC in their role.

Our VCs positively encourage projects that the conferences plan, where possible; all that is needed is for the Coordinator to spend some time looking into the safety and safeguarding requirements, and ensuring that the requisite processes are followed so that the activities are safe. This may involve organising permission slips, getting the Head teacher’s or Youth Minister’s approval or recruiting parents or teachers to assist with supervision.

The number of hours a week vary on many different factors such as the groups’ ages, to how often the conference meets, to the intensity and frequency of the activities they engage in, to the level of support any given conference may need. On average, VCs spend between 1 and 2.5 hours per week on this.

## Vincentian Coordinator Responsibilities

In all our conferences, it should be the young people who identify the needs in their local community and come up with ideas of how to help and make decisions about service activities and fundraising. The role of the Coordinator, then, is to guide these discussions and assist the young people to put their passion and ideas into action by:

- Setting up the group with the support of the Young Vincentians Development Officer (YVDO).
- Archiving meeting minutes in conjunction with the group Secretary.
- Helping the President with preparations for the spiritual reflections and other spiritual input / events.
- Keeping discussions within the realm of possibilities.
- Supporting the group by looking into the feasibility of projects in accordance with Health and Safety policies and duty of care requirements held by the institution.
- Helping the President to organise an election so that leadership roles in the group are filled and maintained year-on-year.
- Ensuring the leadership of the group are fulfilling their roles of: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and Communications Officer, and motivating members without office.
- Updating the Young Vincentians Development Officer at the end of the academic year with statistics and a short summary report (to include testimonies of some of the members) of the group's activities within the year.

## Person Specification

### In Schools

Any staff member within a school can take on the role of coordinating the Young Vincentians group – it does not necessarily have to be the Religious Education Coordinator/Head. What is important is that the person is willing to commit some of their time to attending meetings, charitable activities, and other events and fundraisers that the group organises and is supportive of the Catholic ethos.

### In Parishes

It is not recommended that the Parish Priest take on the role of Vincentian Coordinator simply because of the tremendous responsibilities that already fall on the shoulders of our Priests. It is therefore recommended that a Vincentian Coordinator be somebody familiar and approachable in the parish, like the Youth Worker, Catechist, Pastoral Carer, Parent, Chaplain, or any capable willing volunteer.

### In Universities

It is recommended that the university Catholic chaplain takes on the role. S/he are best placed to support the students and understand their timelines and stress periods as well as local needs.

### DBS

All Vincentian Coordinators are subject to a current enhanced DBS, with a check against the children's barred list. This is normally issued by your school, parish or chaplaincy.

## How the meetings/activities work

Meetings are not meant to be long;

The President opens the meeting with a Vincentian prayer from the SVP Prayer Book, which the conference says together. A spiritual reflection then takes place – using the relevant resources. If there is no activity planned, the spiritual activity could fill the session but we encourage that overall there needs to be a balance struck between the spiritual aspect and the activity.

The Secretary then reads the minutes of the last meeting and group members discuss activities they have done since the last meeting. Any future plans are discussed and decisions recorded by the Secretary.

The Treasurer reports the group's financial situation, a record of any funds raised and money spent on behalf of the group.

The Communications Officer arranges whatever publicity is required by the group. The President concludes the meeting with a prayer from the given prayer book.

The VC should take a back seat role at the meetings, gently steering the members back on track if they become side-tracked. S/he should not dominate. In the early stages, the group might need more guidance, but our standard principle is that the groups are young people led. In some institutions, conferences meet, as well as undertake their voluntary activity all in one go. In others, meetings happen separately from activity, alternating between the two from week to week.

When the group is established, they are encouraged to invite the president of the local adult SVP Conference (if there is one) at least once a quarter. The group may decide to invite guest speakers to address the group from time to time; to talk about a particular issue such as social justice, which could influence the group's activities for the following quarter and inspire other young people to continue in their efforts to shape a more just society.



## Ongoing Support

**Training is minimal if the Vincentian Coordinator is a member of staff in an educational institute. However, necessary training needs to be undertaken by Vincentian Coordinators outside of school parish staff – particularly in the area of child safeguarding. Ongoing support is provided for all VCs via staff at the National Office as well the Young Vincentians Development Officers. All new VCs will be given a log in to the SVP Knowledge Hub and will find relevant training there. This training is brief but essential.**

**If VCs wish, a day of prayer and collective sharing can be organised for Vincentian Coordinators regionally by the National Office Youth Team.**



<https://www.svp.org.uk/mini-vinnies>



<https://www.svp.org.uk/youth-svp>



<https://www.svp.org.uk/b-attitude>



<https://www.svp.org.uk/svpyoungadults>



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