

## **RAISE– Salvationist Article**

Children’s leaders are one of the significant adults in a child’s life. Journeying with a child helps adults to see the world through the eyes of a child, gain insight into the experiences and challenges faced by children and families, and share in the wonder and awe which comes from God encounters. Whether sharing stories, exploring life with God, or playing games, our children’s leaders are making a difference by helping children develop faith, identity and purpose and navigate the world around them.

### **RAISE: Equipping leaders to nurture children**

Our children’s leaders are amazing!

They welcome children as valued members of a community of faith and encourage them to fully participate in all aspects of church life and to understand and engage with the wider mission of The Salvation Army.

They are at the front line of developing the faith and spirituality of children, helping them grow to be resilient and find belonging, identity and purpose. They are instrumental in creating the space and opportunities for children to encounter God for themselves, to grow in faith and to be active participants in mission and service.

*RAISE* is an innovative new online training course designed to equip all prospective volunteer children’s leaders for their work with children, with other leaders, and with families within a Salvation Army context; and to provide learners with a taste of what it is like to work in the field of children’s leadership.

Tracy Wood (Children’s Specialist- Leader Development), says: *‘We are really excited to launch RAISE, which offers children’s leaders quality training and the opportunity for personal development. We have worked with a number of experts and practitioners to ensure that RAISE is full of vibrant, up-to-date content. Our hope is that our children’s leaders feel valued, supported and connected through their participation in RAISE and that our ministry to children through them continues to make a positive impact.’*

### **How RAISE works**

There are nine short modules in *RAISE*, covering relevant topics such as faith development of children, leadership skills, pastoral awareness, working with families, programme planning, children in the community, and children’s ministry online.

Each module takes no more than 60 minutes to complete, and utilises a blended learning approach of text, videos and personal reflection. At certain points there is a space to pause and take some time to reflect or to take part in a learning activity. There is a comprehensive resource list of additional content for those wishing to deepen their learning in a specific area. A personal Learning Journal accompanies leaders throughout the training providing key points from each module, a space for notes, activities and prompts for personal reflection. A certificate can be printed at the end of the course to acknowledge completion,

and children's leaders are encouraged and supported to continue to journey on a pathway of learning after *RAISE*.

Children's leaders that were part of the *RAISE* pilot said:

*'This course is excellent! It flows well, feels relevant and feels fresh. The modules are all very informative, useful and flexible, covering a broad range of subjects. It is easy to follow and work through in your own time. There is a good balance between screen based work, personal reflection and learning activities and the learning journal supports the content really well. All children's leaders should definitely do this training!'*

Whilst *RAISE* will be the mandatory course for children's leaders before they are commissioned as Young People's Sergeant Major, Children's Ministry Team Leader or Junior Soldier Sergeant, it is open to and recommended for all volunteers who work with children within the Salvation Army, whether that is helping out on a Sunday morning or running a weekly community club.

Tracy says, *'Even though this is an online course, we will join each cohort to create a learning community and facilitate an online conversation for learners to share knowledge and experiences, ask questions and learn from each other.'*

To facilitate this learning community, we would ask interested individuals to register to start *RAISE* in one of six cohorts each year: January, March, May, July, September or November. Although modules can be worked through at an individual's own pace, to join with others in the cohort it is recommended that individuals work to complete the nine modules over a two-month period. Learners will then be invited to an online gathering halfway through and will also be invited to join a closed Facebook group to share experiences and resources going forward and stay connected as local children's leaders.

To register for *RAISE*, email [youthchildren@salvationarmy.org.uk](mailto:youthchildren@salvationarmy.org.uk), stating name, corps, role and address for the Learning Journal to be sent to. A link to The Salvation Army's iLearn portal will be sent where the course can be accessed.

### **Some final words**

Ministry with children in a post pandemic world will require some creative, courageous and different thinking about how we can be with and empower our children to be disciples of Jesus in our tradition of social change and justice.

As the world around us changes, we should no longer be content with leading as we always have. What does it look like to build a new generation of vibrant, passionate leaders?

We believe that within everyone is a spark of leadership and we seek to nurture that leadership potential in everyone we work with.

We believe the calling to work alongside children and young people is central to the mission of The Salvation Army and we are committed to equipping and developing youth and children's leaders so they can perform their roles effectively.

And we believe that *RAISE* is part of delivering just that!

Major Helen Schofield

Territorial Youth and Children's Secretary

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/youth-and-children>

Social Media: @youthchildrenSA