

Social Media and engaging with young people

These guidelines relate to internet, email, mobile phone and social networking. For many young people this is their preferred means of communication and it can be an extremely effective tool within youth work. However while it brings great opportunities there are also significant risks and it is important that guidelines are followed.

Leaders communicating with young people or vulnerable adults via the internet, social networking or mobile phone must be criminal records checked in accordance with the diocesan safeguarding guidelines.

It is recommended that:

- If a Leader expects to communicate with young people in the group via email, messenger social networking sites (i.e. Facebook) or texting, written permission from the child's parents should be given.
- One-to-one communication between a worker and a young person should normally be avoided, all communication should be in a page or group context.
- If it is necessary for a worker to communicate with a young person individually, it should be through an approved 'work' account that a supervisor or approved third party can also access and review the conversations. Young people must be made aware that any one-to-one communication will be shared in this way. (See 'Facebook' below).
- Communication should be from a specific account/address known to the young people, parents and supervisor.
- Clear and unambiguous language should be used in all communications. Avoid abbreviations that could be mis-interpreted.
- Do not use any comment or picture of a young person without written parental permission.
- Diocesan Guidelines on the taking of images must be followed.

Mobile Phones:

- In general leaders will use Cathedral based land lines and in the event of off-site trips or exceptional circumstances will use a Cathedral mobile.
- Employed workers should be supplied with a mobile phone dedicated for work purposes.
- This allows for the phone to be switched off outside working hours, and for usage to be accountable.
- The work phone number should be the only number that young people and vulnerable adults are given; a worker's personal number should remain private.
- Texts that raise concerns should be saved and passed on to a supervisor or approved third party within the organisation. Conversations raising concerns should be discussed as soon as possible.

Email and Instant Messenger:

- Be aware of who has access to computers, or other devices, used for communication between workers and young people.
- There should be a 'curfew' on instant messenger communication and this should only take place during normal working hours.
- Log and save all conversations and regularly review these with your supervisor before they are deleted. Make sure that young people know that a supervisor has access to the conversations.
- Video or Voice messenger should be done in public so that other people are aware of what you are doing and to whom you are speaking.

Facebook & Social Networking Sites:

- The best advice is that it is not appropriate to use a personal Facebook account and profile for work with young people, so you should create a professional account to manage your communications with young people
- To create a professional or 'work' account and profile, enter your work email in the sign up box, adding 'Work' or another suitable term after your last name to distinguish your professional profile from your personal (i.e. John Smith Work)
- Your supervisor/Named Person should be aware of the account name and password so that they can at any time log onto the account to monitor the communications. Young people should be made aware that information is shared in this way.
- You should ensure your organisation/church name is entered onto the profile you create.
- Also make sure you use work contact details and web address.
- Adding interests makes your profile more interesting, but only share information appropriate to the young people you will be working with.
- You should use a photo of you in an official/work setting.
- You should consider entering a 'expectations statement' under 'about' in your profile such as:

I am a youth worker with a keen interest in social media which I use to share about the groups and events we run through Church. I also post lots of links that I think young people who come to our groups would find interesting. I generally only log-in to Facebook a few times a week during my work hours. If you need to contact someone fromChurch urgently then please call 0XXXXXXXXX or visit.....(website)

- Any communication or content that raises concerns should be saved or printed, shared and discussed with your supervisor.
- Workers should only accept friend requests for this profile from young people known to them, that they have met offline.
- Communication should normally be in the public domain wherever possible (by using group mailings or public wall posts)
- Where groups are set up, they should be closed, and not open to the general public. The worker should retain administrative rights and moderate the group, only sharing those rights with a supervisor and other trusted workers.

- Workers with personal social networking accounts should customise their privacy settings in order to maintain the boundaries between their personal and professional lives. They should avoid uploading inappropriate personal information.

For this policy the term “leader” refers to those adults leading, teaching or working with young people for prolonged times, for example;

- Schools and Families Officer
- Director of Music
- Assistant Director of Music
- Organ scholar
- Lay clerks
- Children’s groups leaders
- Canon Missioner
- Any Manager work with Vulnerable Adults