

Social media and video conferencing with children and young people



In these extraordinary times, you may want to consider virtual meetups with your church's children's/youth group.

The use of technology and social media platforms has the potential to transform the way in which we can communicate and continue with some forms of ministry at this difficult time. Keeping everyone safe whilst using these platforms is essential, and as it is a new experience for many, it is important to understand how to implement some simple steps that can contribute towards keeping people safe online. Safeguarding is as important in the virtual world as in the 'real' world, and therefore, the same rules should apply. Here is some advice and best practice on how to do this safely:

- Be aware that different platforms have different restrictions in relation to age so ensure you take account of age restrictions within the terms and conditions of use of your chosen platform.
- Avoid the use of Skype / Facetime – these are social media platforms and as such share contact details with all users. You may inadvertently connect young people up with other people as an unintended consequence.
- There are a range of video conferencing platforms (such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, GoToMeeting etc.). When using these platforms, ensure you use the most up-to-date guidance for security – see links below.

- For applications which allow for password access, only use password/passcode protected meetings, create a new password for every meeting, and send details securely to participants (do not, for example, share details on social media). Passwords should only be sent to parents/guardians of children and young people and not directly to the child/young person.
- Enable the 'waiting room' feature, where available, which allows the host to have the discretion to allow invitees in to attend the meeting.
- For children under 11 it is best practice for a parent / guardian to be in the room when they are taking part in an activity online.
- Use of social media/conferencing is beyond the normal running of your group and therefore needs clear permission before use in the following ways:
 - o You must have approval from Minister & Kirk Session and discuss and minute that this is happening – why not trial a video conference with some of these people first? This does not need to be a complicated process.
 - o You need parental consent – set up an email which explains what you are doing, the date and time of the video conference session, which youth leaders are participating and provide some information as to what you will be doing. We advise these conference calls not to take place after 9:00pm at night. Ask for a reply as a form of consent and keep these emails in a separate folder. A consent form can be set up through, for example, google forms or Microsoft forms.
 - o Use parents'/carers' email addresses to send the meeting invite to as this ensures parents/carers are aware that it is happening and can set up the young people to access the session appropriately with any oversight if they want.
- 'Normal' youth group rules would apply including with regards to recruitment and safeguarding process – i.e. you need at least 2 safely recruited youth leaders present who would normally have 'real time' contact with this group. Make sure both leaders are live before young people arrive. Ideally use the same time slot as your normal youth group meeting.
- If new youth members want to join the group, they should have 'normal' group consent forms filled in as well – you will want them to come to the real group anyway when it re-forms. If you are recruiting new leaders for this group, the safe recruitment process must be followed before they can participate.
- Codes of conduct – appropriate behaviour for leaders should be followed as you would expect in the usual youth group setting. It might be worth a discussion with your leaders around this before the meeting happens.
- As always, be inclusive. Are there any young people from your group who would struggle to participate in this way and what extra support can be put in place for them?

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- As well as the video interface, there is usually space to write comments and participants can screen share too – consider use of this facility for example to write one-word answers to questions to share, be creative.
- Be aware of and sensitive to technical difficulties! There can be issues with speakers and microphones. The chances are young people will have this sussed but leaders may have issues. Use the software with leaders first to try and sort out any difficulties.
- **Do not record.** Most video conferencing software allows for the session to be recorded. This is an option for the host of the meeting only. Avoid doing this, as you would need separate permission for data capture and there are all sorts of issues around storage, GDPR etc.

Alongside this document, please refer to section 8 of the Taking Care guidance. Follow this link to the relevant section:

[Taking Care Guidance - Section 8 - Technology](#)

Further information on best practice in this area of virtual communication with children and young people, as well as resources for internet safety, can be accessed through the following links:

[SBNI E-Safety Guidance for Faith-Based Groups](#)

CEOP: The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) has numerous resources for parents and carers and children using the internet; there are several video tutorials on the THINKUKNOW site which is part of CEOP.

NSPCC: has useful resources for keeping children safe online including sections on cyberbullying, sexting, reporting and monitoring.

Parents Protect: is a site to help parents, carers and other protective adults with information and advice to help them prevent child sexual abuse.

ROI

Tusla: Child and Family Agency in Rol

Webwise: provides a range of free primary and secondary school teaching resources addressing a range of topics including cyberbullying, image-sharing, social media and more.

[Be Safe Online - Ireland's Official Online Safety Hub:](#)

Be Safe Online is the Government's campaign to highlight ways to help you stay safe online.

Useful information about privacy settings for online platforms:

[Zoom](#)

[Microsoft Teams](#)

[GoTo Meetings](#)

If you have any further questions, the Head of Safeguarding, Dr Jacqui Montgomery-Devlin, can be contacted on:
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Sample Parental Consent Form

A consent form can be set up and circulated through, for example, google forms or Microsoft forms and an electronic signature from parents is acceptable.

Parental consent form – video conferencing

Event: Regular video conferencing with young people in place of youth work activities

Dates: *State times and days if possible*

Venue: Online

Leader(s) in charge: At least 2 leaders should be present for each online gathering

Details of young person

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Home tel no _____

Age _____

Date of birth _____

Parental consent and authorisation

I give consent for the young person named to participate in the above mentioned activity. I acknowledge the need for acceptable responsible behaviour on his/her part.

Signature _____

Date _____

Name _____

Parent's email _____

In line with GDPR the data you provide on this form will be stored securely for a period of one year from the date of signature, after which it will be destroyed. It will not be passed to any third parties without your expressed consent, except in a medical emergency or where lawfully requested by police.