



Social Media & Young People*

Guidelines

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.

Workers/leaders communicating with young people or vulnerable adults via the internet, social networking or mobile phone must obtain a DBS certificate in accordance with the safeguarding guidelines from the Diocese.

It is recommended that:

- If a worker/leader expects to communicate with young people in the group via email, messenger, social networking sites (e.g. Facebook) or texting, written permission from the young person's parents/guardians should be given.
- One-to-one communication between a worker/leader 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/leader to communicate with a young person individually, it should be through an approved account that a line manager/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.
- Communication should be from a specific account/address known to the young people, parents and line manager/supervisor.
- Clear and unambiguous language should be used in all communications. Avoid abbreviations that could be misinterpreted.
- Do not use any comment or picture of a young person without written parental permission. Church/Diocesan guidelines on the taking of images must be followed.

Mobile Phones:

- 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 any usage to be accountable.
- The work phone number should be the only number that young people are given; a worker's personal number should remain private.
- Texts that raise concerns should be saved and passed on to a line manager/supervisor or approved third party within the organisation. Conversations 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/leaders and young people.
- There should be a 'curfew' on instant messenger communication and this should only take place during normal working hours.
- Workers/leaders need to log and save all conversations and regularly review these with their line manager/supervisor before they are deleted.





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- Make sure that young people know that line managers/supervisors have access to the conversations.
- Video or Voice messenger should be done in public so that other people are aware of what the worker/leader is doing and to whom they 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 workers/leaders should create a professional account to manage communications with young people.
- To create a professional or 'work' account and profile, enter a work email in the sign up box, adding 'Work' or another suitable term after the last name to distinguish the professional from the personal profile (i.e. Mark Heybourne Work)
- Line managers/supervisors 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.
- Ensure the church/organisation name is entered onto the profile created. Also make sure that work contact details and web address is publicised.
- Adding interests makes profiles more interesting, but only share information appropriate to the young people.
- Any photos used should be in an official/work setting.
- Consideration should be given to including an 'expectations' statement in the profile somewhere 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 St Key's 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 from St Key's urgently then please call 01234 567890 or visit www.stkeyschurch.org"

- Any communication or content that raises concerns should be saved or printed, shared and discussed with line managers/supervisors.
- Workers/leaders 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. Anyone with administrative rights should regularly moderate the group, only sharing those rights with their line manager/supervisor and other trusted workers/leaders.
- Workers/leaders 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.



* The Diocese of Norwich has kindly given permission for these guidelines to be adapted for 'The Key'.