

Safeguarding Extra-ordinary Addition in Response to Covid-19 Crisis Video Conferencing with Children & Young People

Current situation

Children (0-11)

All meetings with children take place face-to-face following the safeguarding guidelines in small group or large group settings. If a child needs further pastoral support it is done with a second adult present or the parent.

No communication takes place via video conferencing or phone, although there is nothing in the safeguarding guidelines to prohibit this.

Young People (11-18)

All meetings with young people take place face-to-face following the safeguarding guidelines in small group or large group settings. If a young person needs further pastoral support it is done with a second adult nearby or in a public place like a cafe.

No communication takes place via video conferencing or phone, although there is nothing in the safeguarding guidelines to prohibit this. What is prohibited is 1:1 meetings via video conferencing.

Proposed Addition

Due to the current situation in the country we are not allowed to meet in the same building. Most people are isolated in their homes and electronic or phone communication is the only way to stay in touch. For the children and young people it is vital that they feel 'plugged in' to church and that they know their support is ongoing. This will also be an opportunity to offer them much needed mental health support.

Our proposal is:

- To hold weekly virtual 'Genesis' (11-14s), 'Space' (14-18s) and monthly 'Apprentice' (yr 5 & 6) meetings using 'Zoom'. We will avoid tools like Skype, which reveal the details of the young person.
- To hold smaller group meetings using 'Zoom' as required.
- To give 1:1 support via phone calls.

Guidelines:

- As with all gatherings involving under 18s we will make sure there are a minimum of 2 adults present before the children/young people arrive (the 2 adults must not be related).
- Use ChurchSuite 'Events' to get specific permission from every set of parents for each child/young person represented.
- Ask the parents to specify which email address to use for video calling.
- No person (adult, child or young person) should take part in the video conferencing from a bathroom, and participation from a bedroom is discouraged. If a participant must take part from their bedroom due to conflicting domestic requirements, they are encouraged to maintain their privacy, for example by the use of blurred or virtual backgrounds, or a draped sheet. All people in the call should be suitably dressed.
- Advanced notification should be given to the Children's Minister or Youth Pastors of the date and time of any meetings planned by team members (as per the current protocol). They will keep a record of this information plus any meetings they organise.
- Parents will be informed when meetings will take place.
- Parents will be given a copy of these guidelines.
- Young people will be issued with guidance as to expectations for the sessions and what to do if they are concerned.

- A register will be kept by the host of attendees (including children/young people, leaders and ‘visitors’).
- There is a possibility that parents who don’t have a CCA DBS may be in the video conference. This is unavoidable so should be dealt with in the same way as an occasional visitor to a group. Their names will be put on the register and they will not have access to data about the young people apart from their names.
- As per GDPR rules the video conference call should NOT be recorded.
- ‘Zoom’ allows for conversation at the side, either to everyone or to an individual. This is a tool that can be used for games etc. Leaders should be wary of how they use this chat. Chat should be shut down if it gets out of hand. All leaders present in the video conference should save and keep a copy of the chat.
- ‘Zoom’ allows for file sharing. This should be set so the host is the only one who can share files. Be very careful about what files you are sharing with the group. It would be wise to close all other files before you make the call.
- After the meeting (either group or phone) make a note of the chat and what topics were covered. Also make note of anything out of the ordinary. Follow the usual safeguarding procedures for anything concerning and GDPR guidelines for recording information.
- As always, be inclusive – are there any young people from your group who would struggle to participate in this way? Think about what extra support can be put in place for them, within these & our safeguarding guidelines.
- Be aware of and sensitive to technical difficulties. Make sure your connection is fully terminated at the end of the call to avoid inadvertently saying something you wouldn’t want the young people to hear.
- It is recommended that leaders should test ‘Zoom’ before using it.
- If a young person is receiving 1:1 support it should be done with parents permission. Notes should be made after the meeting that it took place and what was discussed.
- If a child (Year 6 and under) is receiving 1:1 support it should be done by phoning the parent, and then speaking to the child on the parent’s phone, on speaker so the parent can hear if they wish.

Hebrews 10:20-25a

‘Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another...’

This policy was approved by the Standing Committee of Christ Church Abingdon on 24th March 2020, and by the full P.C.C. on 4th May 2020 (with an amendment to the wording of bullet point 4 of the Guidelines)

(to be signed in person when coronavirus restrictions have been lifted)

Keith Dunnett (Vicar)

Roland Knight (Parish Safeguarding Officer)