

March 2020

Social Media and Video Conferencing with Young People

In these extraordinary times, you may want to consider virtual meetups with your youth group (secondary school age – 11+). Here is some advice and best practice on how to do this safely:

- 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.
- Instead use a video conferencing platform such as Zoom: <https://zoom.us/> This is free to use giving you meeting lasting 40 mins max, or a paid for account allows you to host longer sessions. Users only need to have an email address to set up an account.
- Use of this is beyond the normal running of your group and therefore needs clear permission before use in the following ways:
 - **You must have PCC approval** – speak to your vicar, churchwarden, standing committee or PCC group to 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.
 - **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 what you roughly 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. If you would like a copy of a consent form for video conferencing with young people, please email susiemapledoram@manchester.anglican.org
 - **Use parents/carers email address** 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, then a safer 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, what extra support can be put in place for them?
- 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! 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 the guidelines for using Social Media (Section 12) in the Parish Safeguarding Handbook which as a diocese we are using as our Safeguarding Policy. Follow this link to the handbook <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/ParishSafeGuardingHandBookAugust2019Web.pdf>

Further information on best practice in this area of virtual communication with young people has been produced by 31:8 and Youthscape. You can access a copy of this document through this link: <https://www.youthscape.co.uk/coronavirus/p1#safeguarding-new>

Susie Mapledoram, Diocesan Youth Officer

Abbey Clephane Wilson, Diocesan Safeguarding Officer

With huge thanks for the initial work undertaken by Simon Hill, Diocese of Worcester