

Electronic Communications Policy

Updated April 2020

The Diocese of Guildford recognises that social media and other forms of electronic communications can be effective tools for doing your job and supporting the parishes, the Diocese and the wider Church of England. This policy has been developed to help you use the tools successfully and manage the risks. This policy is supported by the [Diocesan Social Media](#) and [Media policies](#) and aligns with the Consortium IT policy.

Who this policy covers: Employees and, when appropriate, Clergy and Church office holders.

What this policy covers: Texting, email, instant messaging, social networking, content sharing and the web in general.

When this policy applies: It applies whether you are at work or not, during work time or not, using work equipment or not.

General considerations

- **Our expectation of you are the same online as offline.** If you shouldn't do it or say it in person, don't do it or say it electronically.
- **If you work for the Diocese of Guildford, your actions reflect on the Diocese of Guildford.** Even if you are expressing an opinion, the public, media and sometimes the courts may view you as representing the Diocese. When communicating about the Diocese, know and keep in mind the Diocese's official positions.
- **Assume nothing stays private**
- **Assume everything is permanent**
- **Assume anything you say could become evidence in court**
- **Follow the law and company policies:** These include confidentiality, privacy, trademark, disclosure laws requiring you to reveal your connection to the Diocese.
- **When in doubt, pause and ask.**

What's required

1. DO respect the law

- Follow copyright, trademark and fair use laws when sharing content.
- Follow privacy, libel, slander, defamation, harassment and discrimination laws when communicating about others.
- Seek permission before mentioning someone publicly.

2. DO be transparent, truthful and honest

3. DO be accurate

4. DO be respectful and kind

5. DON'T release confidential information

6. **DON'T offer legal advice** or other types of advice you are not qualified or authorised to give on behalf of the Diocese.

What's allowed

If you want to contribute to existing digital communities or launch something new, these are a few ways that you can support the Diocese of Guildford.

- Sign up to the Church of England's [Digital Charter](#)
- Familiarise yourself with the [Diocesan Social Media](#) and [Media policies](#)
- Join – sign up to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or other exciting new technologies. It's normal to be a bit nervous when you are doing something new but feel the fear and do it anyway. You won't break the internet.
- Participate – comment, like and write your own posts. *"We do this because we want to maintain relationships. When we favourite and like each other's posts, we add value to the relationship, and reinforce that closeness. We also create a reciprocity effect. We feel obliged to give back to people who have given to us, even in a small way"* ([Psychology of social media](#)).
- Share what you are proud of - your community doing something excellent, a young person working to help others or some local artwork. People connect with real stories and can tell when you are sharing something you love.
- Be an Ambassador
- Help others – when people have questions you can answer do so.