

## **Safeguarding guidelines regarding social media/internet based communications with young people**

Due to the particular circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, these guidelines are designed to enable Walton Churches Partnership (WCP) to provide regular youth and children's work online. They are specific to the social-distancing/lockdown measures put in place by the UK Government, but given the likely length of this crisis, may represent a long-term part of our ministry among young people.

Our current safeguarding policy and procedures remain in force and these guidelines represent an appendix to that policy, and do not supercede or replace them in any way.

### Social media/internet-based communication guidelines

1. Parental permission must be given (by email) before any under 18 takes part in any communication or group. The young person must also be given the choice whether to take part or not – i.e. no young person should be added to a group without their permission.
2. WCP will authorise the use of Zoom (or equivalent) video-conferencing for youth work purposes under these restrictions:
  - 2 youth workers – or one youth worker and an appropriate adult (DBS checked member of the church) will be in the group at all times. One of these must be the 'host' of the Zoom meeting – under-18s cannot use Zoom without parental permission and they must not have charge of the meeting (host).
  - The link to the Zoom meeting will not be emailed out until an email given parental permission has been received. This link must not be made public in any way.
  - The private chat function MUST be disabled before the group begins
  - No recordings are to be made of any of the conversations without explicit parental permission and the permission of all the young people in the group.
  - The steward with oversight of the children and youth work, or Minister where the congregation does not have a steward or equivalent with oversight of the children's and youthwork, will be given advance notice of any group activity using this method.
  - The young people must be reminded that taking pictures of anyone without their permission is not appropriate – and so screenshots of the Zoom meeting can only be taken with the permission of all present. These must not be put on social media or shared in any way without the permission of all present, and for those under-16 parental consent must be given.
3. Currently WCP does not encourage the use of WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram or any other mobile or web-based apps for communication between youth/children's leaders and under-18s.

4. We will continue the practice of sending email information for young people to their parents. However, if a leader wants to set-up a Zoom session with the young people, they can email the parents directly, copying in the steward or minister. This email must state who the other appropriate adult in the group will be, and making it clear that the parents can say no – as can the young people.

*Please can all parents and youth workers email Rachael Jenkins (copying in the steward or minister) to say that they have read and agreed to abide by these guidelines, whether you decide to use internet-based communication with the young people or not.*

Our aim in this, as always, is to do all we can to nurture and care for one another in ways that are appropriate and safe for all. These guidelines are designed to protect everyone.