

Dear Parish Volunteer

Re. Guidelines for meeting parish groups online

As you are aware, we are in unprecedented times and thank you to many of you who have been looking at new and creative ways to meet with other people from your parish community.

We have attached a supporting document to help with any parish digital work.

Some people have been setting up 'Zoom' calls to meet socially or something similar, whilst for many groups meeting as adults this may be ok, when we have been notified of groups wanting to meet with their **youth groups** in a similar way for livestreaming, for this, we have offered the following guidance that we expect you to comply with for the protection of yourself and the young people;

- What is the purpose of the meeting?
 - If it is to share information which is relevant to the whole group, can this be done through your existing communication channels for which you already have sought parents/carers consent?
 - Can you put information on the parish website?
 - Can you pre-record anything and put it on the parish website?
- Who have you notified that you are intending to set up an online meeting for the youth people?
 - The Parish Priest?
 - The Parish Safeguarding Rep?
- Has permission been sought from parents/carers to communicate with the young people using this platform?
- Have the people who are intending to set this up been safely recruited by the Diocese? (There should always be two moderators)
- Has the identity of the young person been secured?
- Has the young person's space been protected?
- Has your space been protected?
- Does the host have a clear understanding of how to follow safeguarding procedures if they see or hear anything which may raise a concern?
- Is this an invite only to the existing youth group?
- In line with the government guidelines, children under 13 years should not be using social media, are all people over 13?

Please note, livestreaming should not be encouraged as a platform for youth groups or meeting with vulnerable adults unless the volunteers are suitably knowledgeable and skilled and the identity of the young person and vulnerable adult has been protected and secured at all times.

This means that the moderators need to have completed the educare safeguarding module and the online safety module (<https://www.educare.co.uk/>).

The following information we are sharing best practice for online safety for your parish groups.

Mobile devices, social networking sites and the internet are great tools to help organisations and groups engage with children, young people and other parishioners, as well as the wider public. However, if used inappropriately, they can also pose potential safeguarding risks and this may lead to abuse, both online and offline.

Creating a safe environment

When creating a safer environment for children and young people you must consider online safety. You should:

- ensure you have online safety policies and procedures as part of your overarching child protection and safeguarding work (we have followed the NSPCC guidelines and for further information, please see the following website: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/online-safety-for-organisations-and-groups>).
- make sure all your staff and volunteers know how to recognise the signs that children and young people might be at risk of or experiencing online abuse and harm [have they all undertaken the relevant safeguarding training? If not – they need to have undertaken the educate module for children and young people / undertaken the online safety training – This needs to be shared with the diocesan youth office so that we can keep a record for audit purposes]
- respond to concerns immediately
- be respectful in all your communications
- be mindful of children's right to privacy, to explore the internet and to express themselves
- use parental controls on all devices [you can find out more about this on the NSPCC website <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/parental-controls/>]

Communicating online

Where these groups contain young people (under the age of 18), particular responsibilities fall on the organiser/host of the group and on the members of the group. This applies even when under-18s participate in a group that is not specifically a 'group for young people', for example a parish online coffee morning. However many of these examples of best practise are also appropriate for interacting with groups of adults.

- Always use age-appropriate language in your communications and make sure all your communications are relevant to the work of the project you're involved in.
- Use parish accounts to communicate with children and young people via email or social media, never personal accounts.
- Use a parish mobile or tablet to communicate with young people.

- Understand how different social media platforms work and what their age limits are – for example you should never use Facebook to communicate with under 13 year-olds. Use NetAware to find out about age restrictions on social networks, apps and games.
- There is an NSPCC podcast for more tips on communicating with young people online – make sure other volunteers have listened to it – and record who is undertaken this training.

For further information, please do not hesitate to contact:

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