Insert church/group logo and contact details

Online Communication guidelines – leaders

* All communication must come from a monitored work account, with appropriate privacy settings. The YNE district youth team can provide you with an account if you do not already have one.
* Communication must be:
  + Transparent – visible to at least two leaders and able to be shared with parents as applicable
  + Accountable – documented and shared with at least two adults
  + Purposeful – for a specific purpose that is in the best interest of the young person
* All leaders engaging in online communication with young people must have been safer recruited in accordance with the Methodist Church’s safeguarding policy.
* Two leaders must be present if there are under-18’s on a video call.
* Do not record the meeting, there are GDPR issues surrounding this.
* Only known young people will be able to join online groups and all under 18’s must have a consent form completed by their carers.
* If a young person wishes to communicate privately, tell them that another adult will be listening to but not participating in the conversation. If you believe a young person is at risk and they refuse to have another adult present, tell them you will be recording the conversation. Never promise confidentiality, say that you may have to share the content of the conversation with somebody who can help.
* Links to access video calls will not be shared publicly and wherever possible a password will be required.
* The software used must not share email or other data with participants.
* Only use platforms that are appropriate, and stick to age restrictions.
* Snapchat should be the last resort, ideally avoid using this platform. If used do not send pictures, stick to text and record the conversation by tapping on the messages so they turn grey.
* Keep records of contact. Use a log (attached) to note when, who, duration and platform as well as content covered. Text conversations should be kept as screenshots[[1]](#footnote-1).
* If you are concerned about the well-being of a young person share logs/screen shots and other information with the DSO.
* Be aware that not all households have internet access, some may have strict rules around use of screens or pay as you go streaming accounts.
* Consider use of the chat and whiteboard function so that young people with different abilities can join in.
* Young people have different framework around what is appropriate online from adults. Ensure you set clear boundaries before and during online engagement. These should include a ban on recording of online conversations.
* If any young person contravenes the boundaries they should be excluded from further online communications.
* Use language that cannot be misinterpreted, avoid the use of abbreviations e.g. LOL and do not add kisses at the end of message even if the young people do so.
* When using group conversations, be aware it is easy for the quieter members to be overlooked. Think about how you will limit the talkers and encourage the shyer group members to participate.
* Although you are working from home, you are still working and normal rules apply e.g. no pyjamas!
* It is recommended that personal items/valuables are kept out of camera view, and that you avoid window views that might reveal the location of your home.
* If you have to make video calls from a bedroom, make sure the bed/intimate items are out of camera view.
* Set boundaries on times you will ‘meet’ young people e.g. no online interaction after 10pm or before 8am.

1. A conversation is more than ‘this is the time there is an online chat tonight’, ‘ok thanks. See you then.’ ‘great, see you later, stay safe’ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)