

Appendix 10: Online and Digital Safety

Young people and many adults use smartphones and tablets as their preferred means of communication. The ease and exclusive nature of these devices make them mediums for entertainment, communication, information and sadly abuse. All those working with children and adults should remain vigilant to signs of abuse through these mediums. Below are the guiding principles to be followed when communicating with children or adults at risk:

- Keep communication strictly aligned to the nature of your role and responsibility.
- Ensure all communication is in a group context.
- Keep the content respectful and appropriate to the subject. Clear and unambiguous language should be used.
- When sending an email or text to young people or adults at risk, workers should copy it to a third-party adult within the church/department to maintain accountability.
- Establish an agreed duration for conversations with children and a curfew for instant messaging, i.e. not between 10pm and 7am.
- Ensure that any of the church's electronic devices used by children and young people for accessing websites employ security controls.
- Regular checks should be undertaken to identify and block any improper use of digital equipment or social media.
- On social networking sites such as Facebook the presumption must be that adult leaders are not added as friends on a young person's site. Leaders should instead use a 'role' profile i.e. 'Youth Leader' that is held generically between the leaders.
- Do not place children's profiles or personal details on a site without written consent of the person with parental responsibility.
- Specific permission should be sought before taking or uploading images of individuals.
- Exercise caution when sharing identifying information/images of children on any internet site. Do not name the individual child without consent from the person with parental responsibility.
- Involvement with any online forums should be moderated.
- Any form of communication received which causes concern should be saved and passed onto the designated safeguarding person.
- Administrative control should be put in place and regularly monitored on all devices that are owned by the church.

Legislation allows for images of anyone in a public place to be published as long as the photography is not intrusive. Extra care should be taken not to capture children or adults at risk in situations that highlight vulnerabilities.

Before using a photograph/film of activities involving minors (under-16s), their consent and the written consent of a person with parental responsibility for them should be obtained. This must specify for what purposes the photograph/film will be used and how it will be stored if not destroyed. A sample consent form can be found in Appendix 11(b).