

# St John's Church Kenilworth

## Use of Social Media<sup>1</sup>

1. Social media sites enable users to create and share content and keep in touch with other users. They include maintaining a profile on a networking site such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat; YouTube, TikTok, WhatsApp, etc. writing or commenting on a blog, whether it is your own or the blog of another person; and taking part in discussions on web forums or message boards.
2. For many, especially young people, using social media is an extension of Physical face-to-face relationships. It is therefore important that churches also engage with their community and worshippers through these platforms. However, this must be done safely to avoid the risk of:
  - Forming inappropriate relationships.
  - Saying things you should not, such as offensive, sexual or suggestive comments.
  - Blurring the boundaries between public work/ministry and your private life.
  - Grooming and impersonation.
  - Bullying and harassment.

## The role of the PCC

3. The PCC must approve the use of social media and mobile phones by the church. Where there are Facebook or similar online groups set up on the church's behalf, the PCC must ensure there is a named person to whom all workers are accountable.
4. The named person must be a church officer, and should be aware of the account name and password so that they can at any time log on to the account to monitor the communications. The named person should be proactive in fulfilling this role.
5. Communications must be shared with the named person. Church officers remain bound by professional rules of confidentiality. Where there is concern that a young person or adult is at risk of abuse, or they themselves pose a risk of abuse to others, safeguarding procedures must always be followed.

## Guidance for church officers

### Do:

- 6.1 Have your eyes open and be vigilant. Maintain the utmost integrity – honesty, transparency, consistency and accountability are key. Treat online communication with children, young people and adults as you would communication that is face to face. Always maintain the same level of confidentiality.
- 6.2 Report any safeguarding concerns that arise on social media to the PSO and the DSA.
- 6.3 Always assume that everything you write is permanent and may be viewed by anyone at any time; and that everything can be traced back to you personally as well as to your colleagues or the church. Always think before you post.

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<sup>1</sup> Copied from the Parish Safeguarding Handbook March 2021:  
<https://tools.parishdashboards.org.uk/storage/app/media/Resources/parish-safeguarding-handbook.pdf> pages 47-51. Changes to the text are listed at the end.

- 6.4 Draw clear boundaries around your social media usage associated with your private life and your use of different social media for public ministry. Keep church account/s and profiles separate from your personal social media account/s e.g. only use a Facebook page, Twitter or blogs for public ministry, while keeping a separate Facebook profile for private life. The distinction between private life and public ministry is often blurred and should regularly be discussed with the named officer(s).
- 6.5 Always ask parents/carers for written consent to:
  - Use and store photographs of children/young people from activities or events in official church publications, or on the church's social media, website and displays.
  - Use telephone, text message, email and other messaging services to communicate with young people.
  - Allow young people to connect to the church's social media pages.
- 6.6 Only use an approved church/ministry account to communicate with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults. The named person should be able to access this and review conversations, and the account should be visible to young people and their parents. Young people must be made aware that any communication will be viewed by all users. Save any messages and threads through social networking sites, so that you can provide evidence to the named person of your exchange when required.
- 6.7 One-to-one communication with a child or young person, should be transparent to a third party, and minimised wherever possible. WhatsApp conversations with young people or vulnerable adults should all include at least 2 adults' and 'one to one conversations between young people and adults should be actively discouraged.
- 6.8 Use clear and unambiguous language in all communications and avoid abbreviations that could be misinterpreted.
- 6.9 Save and download to hard copy any inappropriate material received through social networking sites or other electronic means and show immediately to the named person, PSO, incumbent or, if appropriate, Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.
- 6.10 Use passwords and log off promptly after use to ensure that nobody else can use social media pretending to be you.

## Do not:

- 7.1 Use a personal Facebook or any other social media account in your work with children, young people or vulnerable adults, or add children, young people or vulnerable adults as friends on your personal accounts.
- 7.2 Facebook stalk (i.e. dig through people's Facebook pages to find out about them).
- 7.3 Say anything on social media that you would not be happy saying in a public meeting, to someone's face, writing in a local newspaper or on headed notepaper.
- 7.4 Comment on photos or posts, or share content, unless appropriate to your church role.
- 7.5 Use visual media (e.g. Skype, Facetime) for one-to-one conversations with young people – use only in group settings, unless agreed with the parents and Youth worker for the church young people's Mentoring Scheme. The youth worker must be notified of the timings of all such meetings.
- 7.6 Do not use content containing, or share links to other sites that contain:
  - Libellous, defamatory, bullying or harassing statements.
  - Breaches of copyright and data protection.
  - Material of an illegal nature.
  - Offensive sexual or abusive references.
  - Inappropriate language.
  - Anything which may be harmful to a child, young person or vulnerable adult, or which may bring the church into disrepute or compromise its reputation.

# Mobile phones

8. Wherever possible, church officers should be supplied with a mobile phone dedicated for work purposes. This allows for the phone to be switched off outside working hours, and for usage to be accountable. This means that the work phone number is the only number that young people or adults are given, and the church officer's personal number can remain private. Texts or conversations that raise concerns should be saved and passed on to the named person or the PSO/incumbent (or if unavailable the DSA).

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9. The PCC of St John's endorses the above social media policy.

The following officers of the church have been issued with mobile phones for work:

Michelle Harris, Youth Worker

Our named person for the policy will be shared by our Youth Worker and our Church Administrator

We will ask the named person to report on the working of this policy every year.

The policy will be reviewed annually.

The PCC Secretary will circulate this policy annually to all church leaders, and arrange for its publication on the church website.

Signed for PCC:

Name Printed

Role:

Date:

Approved by PCC on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2021 to be reviewed annually.

# Changes Made to the Policy

Date	Paragraph	Change Made
30/4/21	All	CP: Paragraph numbers added for ease of reference and recording changes.
30/4/21	6.7	Discussion with Andrew, Denise and Michelle suggests the following amendments (all dated 30/4/21): "Avoid 1-1 communication" changed to: "1-1 should be transparent to a third party, and minimised wherever possible."
	9	Added: "Church finances do not allow the supply work mobiles to church officers at present."
	9	Named Officer added: Youth Worker and Church Administrator to share the role.
	1	Added: "YouTube, TikTok, WhatsApp, etc."
	6.4	Added: "The distinction between private life and public ministry is often blurred and should regularly be discussed with the named officer(s)."
5/5/21	7.5	Naomi Grew suggests: The only part that might need to be amended is 7.5 where it says "Do not: 7.5 Use visual media (e.g. Skype, Facetime) for one-to-one conversations with young people..." however during lock down we have been using it for one-to-one mentoring so we might need to add a caveat. Perhaps we could add "Unless agreed with the parents and Youth worker for the church young people's Mentoring Scheme. The youth worker must be notified of the timings of all meetings" Have amended the policy. Suggested addition to 7.5 and new 7.6 using the last sentence of the original 7.5.
29/6/21	6.7	Whats App mentoring messages to be copied to a third party and one to one actively discouraged added following DSO case review and discussion with Andrew and Michelle.
13/07/21	9	The church has now issued a mobile phone to the Youth Worker so this has been amended