



St Andrew's & All Saints

Partnering with God in the flourishing of our communities

Policy for the Use of Social Media with Children and Vulnerable Adults

January 2023 v1

St Andrew's is Registered Charity Number 1128973. All Saints is an Exempted Charity.

The following policy (previously in place) was reviewed and agreed at the Parochial Church Council (PCC) meeting held on 26th January 2023.

St Andrew's and All Saints recognise that modern methods of communication, including email, social media and mobile phones are an integral part of modern life for many people.

It is important that the church engages with the community and with worshippers in these ways. However, this must be done safely to avoid the risk of:

- Forming inappropriate relationships
- Saying inappropriate things, such as offensive, sexual or suggestive comments
- Blurring the boundaries between public ministry and personal life
- Grooming and impersonation
- Bullying and harassment

Expectations for the use of St Andrew's and All Saints social media by church members

Social media includes a wide variety of platforms, such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Snapchat. It also includes posts and comments on posts on Facebook, YouTube and blogs. You should participate online in the same way as you would in any other public forum. Actions should be consistent with Christian values and you are responsible for the things you do, say and write.

DO

Think before you write - remember the immediacy of social media:

- Is this my story to share?
- Could this be 'fake news'?
- Would I want God to read this?

Remember that you represent the church

- Is your post in line with church values?
- Is it helpful to church members?

DO NOT

Post anything that could be deemed offensive to any reader

Mobile Phones:

- The Youth Worker will be provided with, and use a dedicated mobile phone.
- Volunteers may use their own phone and social media profiles in accordance with this guidance and guidance on the Safeguarding Guidelines issued to all people working with children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- Texts that raise concerns should be saved and passed on to a line manager/ supervisor or approved third party within the organisation. Conversations should be discussed as soon as possible.

Email and Instant Messenger:

- Be aware of who has access to computers, or other devices, used for communication between workers/leaders and young people or vulnerable adults.
- There should be a 'curfew' on instant messenger communication and this should only take place during normal working hours, no later than 9pm.
- Workers/leaders need to log and save all conversations and regularly review these with their line manager/supervisor.
- Make sure that young people and vulnerable adults know that line managers/supervisors have access to the conversations.
- Voice messenger conversations should be conducted in public so that other people are aware of what the worker/leader is doing and to whom they are speaking.

Video Conferencing with children, young people and vulnerable adults

- Use of video conferencing with children or young people requires explicit consent of the PCC.
- Use a video conferencing platform such as Zoom or Teams. (Avoid use of platforms such as Facetime or Skype which share phone numbers publicly.). Remember that most video conferencing systems have some age restrictions.
- Video conversations with children, young people or exclusively with vulnerable adults should be conducted in public so that other people are aware of what the worker/leader is doing and to whom they are speaking. If it is not appropriate to have two adults on the call (eg mentoring session), normally another adult should be in the vicinity.
- Parents must give written consent (email response is fine) for the video conferencing session (or series of sessions). For children under 11 years of age, an adult must be present in the room with the children at all times. The leader must see them at the start of the meeting. Then they can be out of view but must remain within sight and sound of the children.
- All participants should be located in a daytime family room and dressed in daytime clothes.
- Video conferencing should not normally be used for one-to-one conversations with children, young people or vulnerable adults. If this happens inadvertently (eg a second child or adult leaves the meeting), the remainder of the meeting should be recorded and saved for three months. If the meeting is with a child, ensure that the parent is notified that this has taken place.

Facebook & Social Networking Sites:

- The Youth Worker will be provided with, and use a dedicated social media profile.
- The social networking sites provided by the church should be used for communication wherever possible
- Line managers/supervisors will be aware of the account name and password so that they can at any time log onto the account to monitor the communications. Young people and vulnerable adults will be made aware that information is shared in this way.
- Any photos used should be in an official/work setting.
- Any communication or content that raises concerns should be saved or printed, shared and discussed with line managers/supervisors. Workers/leaders should only accept friend requests for this profile from young people or vulnerable adults known to them who they have met offline.
- Communication should normally be in the public domain wherever possible (by using group mailings or public wall posts).
- Where groups are set up, they should be closed, and not open to the general public. Anyone with administrative rights should regularly moderate the group, only sharing those rights with their line manager/supervisor and other trusted workers/leaders.
- Workers/leaders with personal social networking accounts should customise their privacy settings in order to maintain the boundaries between their personal and professional lives. They should avoid uploading inappropriate personal information.

Social Media & Young People

Guidelines

These guidelines relate to internet, email, mobile phone and electronic social networking. For many young people this is their preferred means of communication and it can be an extremely effective tool within youth work. However while it brings great opportunities there are also significant risks and it is important that guidelines are followed. Remember that most social media services have an age restriction (e.g. Facebook has a minimum age of 13 years).

It is recommended that:

- If a worker/leader expects to communicate with young people in the group via email, messenger, social networking sites (e.g. Facebook) or texting, written permission from the young person's parents/guardians should be given.
- One-to-one communication between a worker/leader and a young person should normally be avoided: all communication should be in a page or group context.
- If it is necessary for a worker/leader to communicate with a young person individually, it should be through an approved media account that a line manager/supervisor or approved third party can also access and review the conversations. Young people must be made aware that any one-to-one communication will be shared in this way.
- Communication should be from a specific account/address known to the young people, parents and line manager/supervisor.
- Clear and unambiguous language should be used in all communications. Avoid abbreviations that could be misinterpreted.
- Do not use any comment or picture of a young person without written parental permission. Church/Diocesan guidelines on the taking of images must be followed.

Email/Social Media and Vulnerable Adults

- At all times, be aware of the dangers that these platforms and wider use of the internet pose to vulnerable adults.
- Consider whether the platform you are using is familiar to and understood by the participant(s). It may not be wise to encourage them onto unfamiliar platforms.
- Be alert to opportunities to help vulnerable adults understand the dangers of the internet, email and social media.