



Social Media & Online Communication Policy and Guidance

for the Church of Christ the King, Kettering.

This Policy and Procedure was adopted at a Parochial Church Council meeting held on:

Signed: Warden on behalf of PCC

Signed: Vicar and Mission Leader

Date:

*Reviewed annually by the policy owner and brought to the PCC for review
and approval every 3 years. Next review by PCC due January 2026.*

It has been created with direct reference to the Diocese of Peterborough's Using Social media practice guidance and should be read alongside:

- Parish Safeguarding Handbook
- CtK Safer Church Policy
- CtK Data Privacy Policy



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Introduction

This guidance has been produced using the Diocese of Peterborough safeguarding toolbox, CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection) and the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) internet resources to shape and inform the boundaries within this document. Volunteers and Staff are required to read and work with these guidelines as they represent Christ the King, Kettering.

1 What is meant by Social Media?

Social media are websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

Social media activities include:

- Maintaining a profile page on a networking site such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat.
- Creating and sharing content to YouTube, Vimeo, TikTok and other streaming services
- Writing or commenting on a blog, whether it is your own or the blog of another person.
- Taking part in discussions on web forums or message boards.

For the purpose of this document Online Communication is: using the use of applications (APPS) or internet based platforms to communicate either directly to others individually or as part of a group via a video link; uploading a video containing a message or as part of a service or a live video stream of an event, presentation or activity. Commonly used applications are:

- Zoom
- Skype
- Facebook messenger
- WhatsApp
- Instagram
- YouTube
- Twitter
- Blogs
- Twitch
- Discord
- TikTok



2 Who is this guidance for?

The guidance applies to all Staff and members of the CtK team that are representing Christ the King, Kettering and its online presence or footprint and is directed in particular to:

1. All youth workers, youth leaders, youth work interns, employed or voluntary, and their supervisors
2. All other workers employed or voluntary, licensed or lay ministers who are engaged in working with children and young people
3. All other workers employed or voluntary, licensed or lay ministers who are engaged in creating media (text, image, or video) that is shared, streamed or posted for and on behalf of the Church of Christ the King

All of the above are referred to as Church Officers in the remainder of this guidance. A "Church Officer" is anyone appointed by or on behalf of the Church to a post or role, whether they are ordained or lay, paid or unpaid appointments will be made through one of the leadership structures in place: Staff Team, Standing Committee, PCC or Ministry team leader.

3 What is the purpose of this practice guidance?

This guidance seeks to ensure that children, young people, vulnerable adults and church officers are appropriately informed and protected while using social media and online communication on behalf of the Church of Christ the King, Kettering.

4 Why is this practice guidance important for CtK?

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. Churches' engagement with social media should be carried out with a constantly updating understanding of how to use it responsibly. Extra care always needs to be taken when dealing with young people and vulnerable adults. It is important to balance user-friendly workability, and good quality youth work and ministry, with keeping children, young people and vulnerable adults safe.



5 The Risks

Forming inappropriate relationships

It is perhaps easier to form inappropriate relationships using social media. Online 'banter' and private messaging can both lead to a level of intimacy that you would naturally guard against. The professional distance, that it is important for church officers to maintain, can easily disappear when you are connected to someone – either at your instigation or at theirs. This is particularly important with members of the opposite sex, children and young people and vulnerable adults. We must safeguard ourselves so that content could not be perceived as sexual grooming or inappropriate.

Saying things you should not – with increased impact

Social media is public, permanent and has published status. However, people have a tendency online of being indiscrete about themselves, other people and, in our context, the Christian faith and Church. This can then be picked up and shared widely. There is a risk of illegal comments that could be seen as hate crimes, libelous, defamatory remarks etc. Our online behaviour and communication could be something that lets down the reputation of the church in the eyes of the community.

Breach of confidentiality and gossip

As with verbally saying things you should not, the same boundaries apply to social media usage. Electronic and online communication can be used to breach confidentiality and spread gossip and should not be done.

Blurring of public ministry/private life boundaries

The distinction between public ministry and private life is difficult to draw. This is no different online. There are risks associated with personal opinions being seen as public statements, a church officer's private life being invaded and the difficulties of detaching from their work. You are advised to draw clear boundaries around your social media usage associated with your private life and use different social media for public ministry (e.g. only use a Facebook page, Twitter or blogs for public ministry while keeping a Facebook profile for private life – see Social media tools).

Bullying, harassment and malicious accusations

Social media can be used to bully and harass others and is a forum for malicious accusations. Young people are particularly vulnerable to this.

Grooming and impersonation

There are clear dangers, particularly for children and young people, from those who use social media as a means of grooming

If you see or receive any abusive / inappropriate or concerning message please inform the incumbent (Rob Bewley) or Parish Safeguarding Officer (Steve Atkins).



6 Role of the PCC and Staff Team

The PCC and/or Staff Team should always approve the use of social media by the church, and which social media should be used.

Where there are Facebook or similar online groups set up on the church's behalf the PCC and/or Staff Team should ensure there is a *named person* to whom all workers are accountable. The named person is to be a Paid Employee or PCC member.

The named person should be a worker colleague or supervisor and should be aware of the account name and password so that they can at any time log onto the account to monitor the communications. The named person should be proactive in fulfilling this role.

The PCC have oversight of the social media roles, please see Appendices ii for a complete list of the current team performing these roles.

Wherever possible and necessary the PCC should supply church officers with a dedicated mobile phone for work purposes. This allows for the phone more easily to be switched off outside working hours, and for usage to be more easily monitored. It also allows for the workers' personal number to remain private. See also "privacy" in section 9 below.

7 Consents

Church Officers should always ask parents and guardians for their written consent to the following:

- Use of photographs of young people from activities or events in official church publications, or from the church's social media, website and displays. (See <http://www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk/safeguarding/safeguarding>)
- Email communication with young people
- Use of telephone, text message and other messaging services between young people and Church Officers
- Use of video communication platforms including video conference/meeting and streaming services
- Young people interacting with the church's social media pages

Church Officers should not assume consent; however, consent is not always required because of article 6(1)(f) legitimate interest.

If a person has been asked or offers to record a video or share images to be used online and that person is fully informed and aware of the purpose for which the video and images are to be used¹. Christ the King Kettering are able to use the video or images (i.e. leading prayers, reading the Bible, sharing a story or thought for the day) for the intended purpose online because they chose to create the video / photo and share it.

¹ Suggested text: 'name' thank you for being willing to create and share this week's (Reading, Prayers, Thought) for our online (service, thought for the day, social media post). By doing this we assume that you are happy for it to be posted online with your name appearing alongside it, and also that you understand that once posted it will be difficult to remove from the internet completely. If you have any concerns, please contact the Church Office on..



8 Confidentiality

Church Officers should ensure that vulnerable adults and their carers, young people and their parents / legal guardians are aware that social media platforms are not themselves confidential systems. For example: communications are shared with the named person Groups with more than one adult “present” are always the safest. Crucially, whilst church officers are bound by professional rules of confidentiality, where there is concern that a young person is at risk of abuse, or themselves pose a risk of abuse to others, safeguarding procedures must always be followed.

9 Privacy

The lines between public ministry in the church and private life can become particularly blurred in social media. Always assume that:

- Everything you write is permanent and can be viewed by anyone at any time
- Everything can be traced back to you personally, as well as to your colleagues or the Church of Christ the King, Kettering

10 A trusted role

Remember you are at all times in a position of trust and acting on behalf of the church as a church officer and are a role model for children, young people and vulnerable adults. In some cases, you will be acting as a role model for youth work interns under training. When using social media, but not on behalf of the church, you remain at all times in a position of trust, and may still be perceived as an ambassador for the church, and a role model for young people and others who are vulnerable.

11 Facebook & Social Networking Sites²

The safest option to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults is not to use a personal Facebook account and profile for your work with them. You are advised to keep the Church or Diocesan Group account and profile separate from your social media account for personal use. In other words, create a separate church or diocesan group page related to your church role for your communications with young people and vulnerable adults.

When setting up a Facebook page for your church, ensure young people and their carers can easily find out who is responsible for the content. Be cautious about accepting friend requests from church members and do not accept them from children and young people.

- If you are using a church computer/hardware/software, you cannot use a private Social Media account for work purposes
- If you do allow young people, or others to have access to your personal social networking account or profile, in order to protect your and your friends’ children or any other vulnerable people, and so as not to potentially compromise the church, you must: ensure that no one using the site can access photographs of, or information about your family or

² This includes all the following that are currently used by the Church of Christ the King: Twitter, Instagram, Twitch, Discord, Zoom, WhatsApp, Facebook.



friends. Only the ministry profiles of youth workers, interns, youth leaders, clergy and so on should be visible.

To do this you should therefore set the privacy settings to the appropriate level, customising them in order to maintain the boundaries between your personal life and church role. For further information contact the Named persons in section 6.

How to create a “ministry” or “church role” account and profile

- Enter your work email in the sign up box, adding ministry or another suitable term after your last name to distinguish your ministry profile from your personal profile (i.e. John Smith ministry)
- Your ‘Named Person’ should 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 should be made aware that information is shared in this way
- Ensure your church or diocesan group name is entered onto the profile you create. Also make sure you use your ministry contact details and web address
- Adding interests makes your profile more interesting, but only share information appropriate to the young people or vulnerable adults you will be working with
- Use a photo of you from your ministry setting
- Any communication or content that raises concerns should be saved or printed, shared and discussed with your named person
- Only accept friend requests for this profile from young people or others known to you, that 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. You should retain administrative rights and moderate the group, only sharing those rights with the named person or other trusted church officer

Twitter & Instagram

- Young people can follow staff and volunteers on Twitter. Leaders should be aware as they tweet that they are a role model to young people.
- Direct messaging should be short and should usually be a one-off communication to arrange a meeting or remind young people of an event, a record or screen shot of these should be kept for accountability reasons.
- Staff and volunteers can follow young people on Twitter providing:
 - a) They have a valid reason for doing so e.g you lead them in at a group etc.
 - b) They are prepared to be open and honest to questioning from the CtK Youth Team & Staff.

YouTube

- CtK staff and volunteers should generally not subscribe to any young person's YouTube Channel, unless given permission by a Member of the staff team.

Note: This list is not exhaustive and should not be treated as such due to new apps being designed all the time. However, they will undoubtedly have similarities to those already mentioned and so the same principles embodied in this policy would apply.



12 Mobile Phones

Wherever possible and necessary, church workers 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 are given and the worker's personal number remains private. Texts that raise concerns should be saved and passed on to the named person detailed in section 6. Conversations raising concerns should be discussed as soon as possible.

13. Guidance for specific forms of communication.

Many of the following guidelines are aimed at our work with those under 18 or adults that are vulnerable, however they can also form good practice for all the ministry areas at Christ the King. (Please note we have used the term young people to denote all those who are vulnerable)

- Communication should not normally take place with young people before 8.00am and after 9.30pm (10.30pm after a Friday Youth Night or later at a residential camp) or on 'staff members' days off. Note this does not mean staff and volunteers have to be available to young people at all other times.
- Our young people should regularly be made aware that, whilst staff and volunteers will exercise appropriate discretion in dealing with the substance of communication, they cannot promise confidentiality (please see CtK Safeguarding policy for more guidance). Any content that raises concerns should be saved/printed and passed on to the ministry head or child protection officer.
- Clear and unambiguous language should be used in all communications. Avoid abbreviations that could be mis-interpreted.
- Only use instant messaging with young people to further the aims of the church, not for personal reasons.
- The guidance contained in this document may mean privacy settings etc. may need to be changed on your personal profiles etc.

Email - Be aware of who has access to computers, or other devices, used for communication between workers and young people.

- Once permission is given, staff and volunteers can hold email addresses for young people in their care — providing they have good reason to and their level of involvement and interaction with young people warrants it.
- Emails should be short and should usually be a one-off communication to arrange a meeting or remind young people of an event.
- Emails should be kept on file, so that they can be traced if necessary.
- Conversations should not be had over email. Staff and volunteers should arrange to meet one-to-one (in an appropriate location i.e. at a youth event) with a young person if the young person would like to talk.
- If an email raises any child protection concerns, the safeguarding co-ordinator should be informed straight away, if contact cannot be made, inform the Ministry Head.



- When a staff or volunteer team member leaves the youth team, young people's email addresses should be removed from their personal address books (you may be asked by a staff member if this can be checked).
- Staff should only email using their work account and not their personal email accounts.

Texting/Instant messaging.

- Once permission is given, staff and volunteers can hold mobile phone numbers of the young people in their care — providing they have good reason to and their level of involvement and interaction with young people warrants it.
- Text communication should generally be short and should ideally be a one-off communication to arrange a meeting or remind young people of an event.
- Staff and volunteers should use an appropriate tone; friendly, but not over-familiar or personal. Whilst communications should be warm and friendly they should not suggest or offer a special relationship.
- If a text message raises any child protection concerns, the safeguarding co-ordinator should be informed straight away, if contact cannot be made, inform the Ministry Head.
- Staff and volunteers should only give personal contact details that are within the public domain of CtK, including their mobile number i.e. a contact they would give out to anyone, not one reserved for 'certain people'.
- Ideally conversations should not be had over texts. Staff and volunteers should arrange to meet one-to-one (in an appropriate location i.e. at a youth event) with a young person if the young person would like to talk.
- Log and save all conversations and regularly review these with the named person before they are deleted. Make sure that young people know that a named person has access to the conversations

Note: Whatsapp or iMessage would be considered as a preferred method of texting young people as it is specifically designed to 'group' text people. This would mean that more people would see the texts and so the accountability level would be higher.

Phone Calls

- Staff and volunteers can have phone calls with young people, but these should be kept short and be within the 'specific forms of communication' guidance within this policy.
- If a disclosure is made that raises a safeguarding concern, verbatim notes should be made as soon as possible. This information should be reported to the safeguarding co-ordinator straight away, if contact cannot be made, inform the Ministry Head.
- When a staff or volunteer youth team member leaves the youth team, young people's numbers should be removed from private phones and any other digital record (you may be asked by a staff member if this can be checked).



Video conference and virtual meetings

In certain circumstances the use of a video conference platform might be considered a useful method of communication. The use of such a platform must adhere to the following guidelines to enable it to be used safely especially with secondary aged young people and vulnerable adults.

- Avoid, where possible, Skype and Facetime – these are more social media tools and as such share contact details with all users, you may inadvertently connect people with unintended consequences
- Use a video conferencing platform. Zoom is a good example and users are able to use Zoom's browser-based access or simply sign up for free using just an email address
- To use these facilities requires PCC and Staff team approval
- You must also have parental consent and the parents/carers fully informed of the details for the meetings as they are arranged. A simple way to do this would be to send the meeting invitation to a parent/carers email address as well as the young persons
- Do not record the meeting as this would need separate consent and raises multiple issues with storage and GDPR
- A minimum of two leaders should take part and both should be signed into the meeting ahead of any young person joining. The only possible exception to this could be a mentoring huddle/prayer time, under these circumstances parents should be informed by the leader and you should not be alone with a young person within the video call and, where possible, be in a public place

All normal youth group rules and guidance should be followed with regards ratios of leaders to young people, safer recruitment and safeguarding.



14 Some safer working Dos and Don'ts

Do

- Have your eyes open and be vigilant
- Ensure that parents or guardians consent has been obtained and that they are aware of how their young person is going to be contacted and take part in an activity
- Maintain the upmost integrity – remember that your profile only supplements the real person and is not an alter-ego. Honesty, transparency consistency and accountability are key
- All Church workers communicating with young people or vulnerable adults via the internet, social networking or mobile phone should be recruited safely, asked to complete confidential declarations and be criminal records checked in accordance with Church of England and Diocesan Safer Recruitment practice guidance
- If a worker expects to communicate with young people in the group via email, messenger, social networking sites (i.e. Facebook) or texting, written permission from the child's parents should be given
- One-to-one communication between a worker and a young person is best avoided, communication is safer in a page or group context
- If it is necessary for a worker to communicate with a young person individually, it should be through an approved church/ministry account that a named person 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
- Save any messages and threads through social networking sites, so that you can provide evidence to the named person of your exchange when required.

Or have an extra leader as part of the chat who doesn't take part in conversations but can ensure there is accountability.

- Make sure communication is from a specific account/address known to the young people, vulnerable adult, parents and named person
- Use clear and unambiguous language in all communications and avoid abbreviations that could be misinterpreted
- Treat communication with young people as you would in real life. If you are having a one-to-one conversation online, the same safeguards are needed as if you were in a face to face meeting
- Save and download to hard copy any inappropriate material received through social networking sites or other electronic means and show immediately to your named person, incumbent or, if appropriate, Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser
- Use passwords and log off promptly after use to ensure that nobody else can use social media pretending to be you.



Do not

- Do not add young people as friends on your church account. In the case of Facebook, adding children under 13 years of age as a friend is in any case contrary to Facebook terms and conditions
- Do not Facebook stalk (i.e. look through people's Facebook pages to find out about them)
- Do not use any comment or picture of a young person without written parental permission. Diocesan Guidelines on the taking of images should always be followed
- Do not say anything on social media that you would not be happy saying in a public meeting or to someone's face, or writing in a local newspaper or on headed notepaper
- Do not comment on photos or posts, or share content, unless appropriate to your church role
- Do not use visual media (e.g. Skype, FaceTime) for one to one conversations with young people, use only in group settings.

In particular, do not allow content to contain 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
- Sexual or Offensive 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

15 Online Worship Gatherings

These are public events, held on social media, which leave a trail that is recorded. All interactions are via a public forum and live, seen by potentially large numbers of people (adults and young people).

Where young people are joining in as physical groups, their leaders should use a consent form beforehand for parents to give relevant permissions, including for use of photographs. Interaction should be primarily through a group profile, on shared devices, shown to the group on a big screen. Under 13's should not be allowed to use their own devices during a session.

Although the public and recorded nature of the situation makes it relatively safe, caution should always be exercised where young people are concerned. There should be discussion with young people on the risks, highlighting that anyone they engage with online, even if it's through a Diocesan gathering needs to be checked out in real life, and should always be in a public space until they are totally sure of their trustworthiness.



16 Compliance

Misuse of social media by a church officer will result in any offending content being removed and may lead to the church officer being suspended from using social media as a representative of the church. A note of the incident will be kept and in the case of a safeguarding issue will be reported to the Diocesan Safeguarding team or the Police if appropriate. More serious violations may also be pursued through the provisions of the appropriate Disciplinary Procedure and could include dismissal.

Appendices

You can download a Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Snapchat full safety checklist here :

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/young-people/resources-11-19s>

<https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/> the National child exploitation and online safety website.

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/> the website for the educational side of CEOP

<https://www.internetmatters.org> is a non-profit organisation set up to keep children safe and their parents informed about online safety

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/social-media/> is the NSPCC guide to social networks and how to keep your child safe.



People authorised to maintain social media on behalf of the Church of Christ the King.

The list below provides the details of people who have access to and can act on behalf of/post on behalf of the ministries at the Church of Christ the King, Kettering. Oversight of this list will be maintained by the Associate Vicar and Youth Mission Leader they both have access to all the platforms. This list is up to date as of the agreement of this policy.

Any significant changes will be shared with both the staff team and the PCC.

Platform	Person(s)
Facebook, Main CtK page	Admin: Sarah Bennett, Steve Dodman, Andrew Bubeer Access: Anushka Bewley, Lowri Lane
Fridays at CtK	Jo Batch, Claire Dale
Prayer at CtK	Rob Bewley, Sarah Bennett, Clare Bilney, Adrian Weal
Men's Ministry	Andy Hotchin to close down
YouTube	Andrew Bubeer, Steve Dodman, Anushka Bewley
Instagram, Main CtK account	Anushka Bewley, Sarah Bennett
Instagram, Youth account	Kelly Bonneval-Cox
TikTok	Kelly Bonneval-Cox

