

## Policy on the Use of Social Media and Mobile Communications

A) The PCC approves the use of social media and mobile phones by the church.

B) The PCC appoints Revd Mandy Maxwell or Sheila Betts as the named persons to whom all workers are accountable.

### Notes:

the terms 'child' or 'children' apply to anyone under the age of 18

the term 'parent' applies to anyone with guardianship or caring and parental responsibility for the child

the term 'staff' applies to members of staff and volunteers

the term 'account' may refer to a church social media account or a personal account, according to the context of a particular sentence.

All official church communications on social media will be sent using designated accounts only, and not personal accounts. Individuals can use personal accounts for personal social media use, and can comment on, like or share official church communications using their own personal accounts if appropriate.

All church social media accounts will be password-protected, and the named person and at least one other will have access to each account and password. In the case of Facebook pages, and accounts/social media presence which function in a similar way, personal passwords should not be shared but the named person should be a page administrator and able to see all communications and actions by each individual with access.

The accounts/pages will be monitored by the named person and at least one other in order to provide transparency. **The named person should be proactive in fulfilling this role.**

A list of all 'approved for church use' social media accounts and platforms will be published on the church website. This list will be approved by the PCC.

The designated staff managing our online presence will seek advice from our designated safeguarding lead to advise on safeguarding requirements.

Designated staff will remove inappropriate posts by any user or commenter, explaining why, and informing anyone who may be affected (as well as the parents of any children involved).

We will make sure children are aware of who manages our social media accounts and who to contact if they have any concerns about something that's happened online.

Church officers remain bound by professional rules of confidentiality. Where there is a concern that a young person or adult is at risk of abuse, or they themselves pose a risk of abuse to others, Parish safeguarding procedures must always be followed.

## Basic Principles

Social media, such as Facebook and Instagram, are online platforms that allow users to create, rather than just consume, online content. Typically, they allow users to upload photographs, daily updates, comments, and so on. Social media usage is widespread, particularly amongst younger adults and children: for many young people the distinction between the 'online' and 'offline' worlds is an artificial one. As some have pointed out, if the church does not engage with young people on social media, then the church will not engage with a major aspect of their lives.

## Other Resources

The world of social media changes rapidly; by the time guidance is in-print it can be out-of-date! This section provides some general pointers, but it is highly recommended that readers familiarise themselves with the following online resources which provide more detailed advice which is regularly updated:

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk> is the education programme from NCA-CEOP, a UK organisation which protects children both online and offline.

<https://parentzone.org.uk/home> A hub of advice for families from Parent Zone's experts.

<https://www.parentsprotect.co.uk/internet-safety.htm> how to protect children in the digital world, how to report harmful content and to develop skills for healthy screen time.

<https://www.childnet.com> a non-profit organisation working with others to help make the internet a great and safe place for children.

## Don't be too restrictive

The evidence suggests that taking a highly restrictive approach to social media usage with young people is unhelpful, as they will usually find a way to use it anyway and may end up taking more risks because their usage is already 'illicit'. The evidence also indicates that the majority of young people are capable of identifying risks in the online world and avoiding them. It is important to avoid treating the world of social media as 'scary' and of seeing dangers everywhere; for many young people, their social media use is a positive and enjoyable aspect of their social lives.

## Best Practice

However, sensible precautions should be taken in the use of social media within a Church context. In many ways, these precautions are simply online versions of safe practice in the offline world:

- Avoid 'lone working' in the online world: Practically, this means avoiding one-to-one online chat (e.g. direct messaging) between adults and young people.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries in the online world: Just as in the offline world, it is important to keep a distinction between our private lives and our work within church, and to pay particular attention to the dynamics of power and influence as discussed in Section 12 of the Parish Safeguarding handbook.
- Do not use personal social media accounts to contact children: The simplest way to observe the above two precautions is to avoid having leaders and young people as 'friends' on social media (e.g. Facebook). It is far preferable to have an official account for the group in question (such as 'St Andrew's Anywhere Youth Group'), and to ask young people to 'like' that page. Any news about group events or anything else can be posted on that page. More than one leader should have access to this page, providing for accountability and transparency. Conversations

between leaders and young people should happen in the public section of these pages (such as the 'wall' or in comments under posts) where everyone can see them, rather than via direct messages.

- Behave in the online world as you would offline: Simply put, if you would not say it offline, do not say it online! This includes posting links to offensive or otherwise inappropriate content, making comments about someone's appearance that could be interpreted as either sexual or offensive, or 'liking' inappropriate content on social media.
- Treat online 'consent' the same as offline 'consent': You will need the consent of the individual and/or their parents to use and store photographs, to retain any information relating to them online, and so on. (See the next Section for further guidance regarding the use of images). It is a good idea to make their parents aware of the social media that our church uses and ensure that you have their consent to their child's usage (depending on the age of the child – older children can consent in their own right).

**Mobile Devices.** Church employees and certain volunteers, such as youth group leaders, should not use their personal mobile phone number for church business when communicating with children or vulnerable adults. This means that any personal mobile phone number can remain private. Mobile devices can be used as a means to access email and social media but should not be used in direct conversation through calls and direct messaging.

- Calls that are church related should be made using the prefix 141 or, be otherwise logged and the details passed to the PSO (time of call, duration, purpose, person called).
- Any texts or conversations that raise concerns should be saved and passed on to the parish safeguarding officer.
- If a church employee is provided with a 'work mobile', they should be required to sign to say that they will use it only in accordance with the guidance in this document.

## APPENDIX 1 – Notes on implementing the policy

- 1) Any social media content relating to church activity is only to be posted by designated people:

### **Facebook**

**Trumpington Church: Parish Administrator**

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**Trumpington Messy Church (not in use at present)**

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### **Instagram**

**Trumpington Church: Parish Administrator**

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- 2) Photos and videos of church activities, where people are in the frame, should only be used and retained when signed consent has been obtained – ideally before taking the photo/video but, if not, still during the event while subject is still present.
  - A supply of photo/video permission forms should be available in the Church and the Bakehouse meeting room. Tacit consent is considered to be given when images are displayed over Zoom and the participant has chosen to show their video.
  - Completed forms should be kept securely in the filing cabinet in the Bakehouse.
- 3) Clergy should work with a designated phone number for church related calls. This could be a mobile number or a landline but should be clearly stated as being their designated number. Full time Church Workers in other capacities should be given the option of having a church phone or using a designated phone number.
  - A record of these numbers should be kept on file in the office.
- 4) Occasional workers and volunteers involved in church activities who use their phone or device for these activities should have a log of conversations/texts and are encouraged to save these. Such logs are an important record if a safeguarding issue is raised. These workers are discouraged from using text or similar methods to communicate with individual children, but encouraged to use a trackable, multiple administrator platform.

If photos/videos are taken, they should be sent to one of the designated people in point 1 above for posting on church social media sites or uploading to the website. \

Photo/video permission must be obtained as in point 2 above.



**Pictures, Video Clips, Computer Images and Social Networking Permission Form**

Church Officers should always ask parents and guardians for their written consent to the following. Please mark the statement below to show whether you agree to the following:

- Use of photographs or video clips of young people from activities or events in official church publications, or from the church’s social media, website and displays.
- Email communication with young people.
- Use of telephone, text message and other messaging services between young people and staff/volunteer church activity leaders.
- Young people connecting to the church’s social media pages.

If you indicate you do not wish this to happen, you will not be asked for an explanation and your request will be respected.

I do/do not give permission for pictures and video clips to be taken

I do/do not give permission for email communication

I do/do not give permission for use of telephone, text message and other messaging services between young people and staff/volunteer church activity leaders

Child/young person’s name .....

Signed (parent/guardian)

Please print name .....

Date