

Social media policy and electronic communication: August 2016

This policy is based on the Diocese of Salisbury's safeguarding policy 2013 but is more extensive and robust to cover other areas of our ministry.

1. Many young people regularly communicate using the internet and mobile phones. Using these methods effectively can really help groups run by St Francis Church stay connected with group members and keep them up to date with what is going on. It is however, important to use these platforms in a safe way to protect ourselves, the people we work with and to not bring St Francis Church into disrepute.
2. Technology is growing at fast pace and therefore ways in which young people communicate evolve very quickly. It is therefore prudent that this policy is reviewed regularly to adhere with the guidelines of the platform being used and they are relevant to the time (ie talking about **MSN messenger** would be out of date as of Sept 2014).
3. There are some key principles to remember when communicating electronically:
 - i. It is very difficult to ensure any communication made electronically is truly private.
 - ii. Once something is online, it is very difficult to delete it with utter confidence, i.e. once it is out there, it is out there.
 - iii. Communication electronically can be at a greater danger of being mis-interpreted as the normal nuances of conversation on missing.
 - iv. All communication should be broadly positive.
4. Below are some specific (but not all inclusive) guidelines for some ways of communicating with young people under the age of 18 years old
5. For direct types of communication to happen with young people, permission must be sought from the parent/guardian.
6. **Instant messaging:**
 - i. **Text Messaging:** Text can be a good way to send out information about events that are happening, or late cancellations.
 - Use group messages wherever possible.
 - When sending messages to under 18's, another suitable adult should also be included in the message. (ie, if a message is sent to someone attending Fuse PM, another member of the Fuse PM should be included in the message).
 - Permission must be sought from parents/guardians for communication with young people.

- When texting and individual young person, messages sent and received should be forwarded to a person(s) on the staff team.
- Only people whose phone contract is full/part paid by St Francis Church should engage in text communication with young people as then they can submit their itemised phone bill to account for all messages sent.
- Workers should not use their phones for work purposes outside of reasonable hours unless on trips etc.
- Avoid the use abbreviations that can have ambiguous meanings (such as 'lol') and always end messages with your name and no 'kisses' etc.
- Any texts or conversation that raise concerns should be saved and passed on via normal safeguarding route.

ii. **Instagram:** Instagram allows users to share photos to be shared with followers. If enough followers are gained, it can be an instant visual way of showing events that are either happening or about to, to an audience. It may however be no more use that **Facebook** for doing this

- Once on the internet photos are no longer private.
- Users of **Instagram** must be 13 years old therefore if you become aware of a follower under this age then parents should be informed immediately
- This page is to be 'followed only' by young people and not to be used to follow young people back. This page can be used to follow projects in the interest of St Francis youth at the Lounge
- Instagram has a direct messages service which can be used to contact young people if it is deemed appropriate. This will be done in discussion with the youth work leader. User name and password will be made available to Safeguarding officer and vicar as necessary and all direct messages will be printed and filed.
- Must adhere to 'terms of use.'

iii. **Snap Chat:** SnapChat is an instant picture messaging service that sends a picture to groups or individuals that only lasts for a set amount of time before deleting. It is not advisable to use this platform in our context at St Francis Church.

- Leaders/helpers who have Snapchat will be advised as part of the St Francis Youth rules it is not suitable to have any young person part of St Francis church/youth groups on their SnapChat follow list.

iv. **WhatsApp:** Is a free instant messaging app available on all major carriers that uses the internet to send text messages and is an effective way to let larger groups know about events

- WhatsApp's T&C state You affirm that you are either more than 16 years of age, or an emancipated minor, or possess legal parental or guardian consent, and are fully able and competent to enter into the terms, conditions, obligations, affirmations, representations, and warranties set forth in these Terms of Service, and to abide by and comply with these Terms of Service. Therefore if we become aware that young people are operating whatsapp under 16 without parental permission, we will try our best to inform parents.

- If some groups (eg home groups, awakenings, or worship) of whom all members were above 18 years old and technologically minded (so as not to exclude people) wanted to use this method, it could be a good way to cheaply and quickly communicate with their group.

7. **Email:** If young people and their parents/guardian consent then it is fine to send out information by email about groups and any extra activities.

i. An options to opt out of this at a later date should be available and regular 'house keeping' of emailing lists to check that all address included are still 'relevant' to the message being sent.

ii. All emails sent by staff should be written in a professional manner and have a 'signature' at the bottom with contact info for the church.

iii. All emails sent by staff for professional purposes should be broadly positive and use language that avoids ambiguity. If negative emails are received, it may be more appropriate to reply with an offer of a face to face meeting or a phone call as these can lead to clearer understanding.

iv. Group Emailing services such as **MailChimp** are a good way of easily sending emails to many people as long as messages adhere to their 'terms of use'. As such it is advisable to consider that any information (including email address) that an account with **MailChimp** or other similar tool will probably be accessible by the service provider. Therefore any information provided to such an organisation should be done so taking this into account.

8. **Twitter:** Twitter is a micro blogging site which allows users to share a short quote with their followers.

i. The tip in **Twitter's** terms of service state: 'What you say on **Twitter** may be viewed all around the world instantly. You are what you Tweet!' As with each of these platforms, it is worth considering this fact before utilising **Twitter** and in fact **Twitter** is one of the most public platforms that can be used.

ii. It is very difficult to restrict as such who follows an account on **Twitter**.

iii. The aim of **Twitter** accounts held by St Francis church or affiliated groups or persons is to share information with its followers. It is also to follow other institutions that we would deem 'worth following' by people who follow us. It is not however to follow all the individuals we can.

- iv. We should strive to ensure that all accounts are 'verified'.
 - v. It is not advisable to 'follow' anyone under the age of 18 years old on twitter with a personal account.
 - vi. Any direct messages sent to/from private accounts by someone under 18 years old should be recorded and reported.
9. **Facebook: Facebook** is a very effective way of communicating to large groups and individuals quickly and a large number go people have an account with them.
- i. There a two policies of **Facebook** that restrict its use with young people (see appendix b): firstly, no-one under the age of 13 years old should have a **Facebook** account. Second **Facebook** advises that no one email address should hold more than **one personal** account with **Facebook**.
 - ii. **Facebook Pages:**
 - St Francis Youth Work has one page and one private group:
 - St Francis Youth at the Lounge page is used to post events, open forum, pictures of events (pictures of young people will only be posted if consent has been given by their parent/guardian). It is the public face of the youth work at St Francis Church on Facebook and as such should be treated with this in mind at **all** time and for **all** posts.
 - Fuse Pm groups will be used to advertise events for Fuse PM only. Young people are allowed and encouraged to post things on there although any inappropriate content will be removed at the first possible opportunity. Only young people who attend Fuse PM and youth team associated with Fuse PM will be a pair of this group plus staff team of St Francis Church for accountability. All requests to join the group will be judged by the youth work leader using the above criteria.
 - iii. **At the discretion of the Youth Work Leader/Staff team, those who work with young people may be friends with young people over 13 years old who attend groups run St Francis at the Lounge under the following guidelines:**
 - **Leaders can send and receive friend requests to young people who attend youth groups at St Francis Church so long as they fulfil the terms set out by Facebook (ie 13 year old or over)**
 - **If a leader decides to no longer be a part of the youth team, they must delete all young people under the age of 18 years all from their Facebook account**
 - **Refrain from commenting on posts with abbreviations i.e LOL-as they have many meanings.** Try to comment broadly positively on a public post if appropriate. If a challenge needs to be made, contact the youth work leader for appropriate next steps
 - **Communication with young people regarding events etc should be posted on the relevant St Francis Youth Pages and not on a young person's own personal Facebook wall.**

- The Youth Work Leader reserves the right to delete any comments or posts on any of the St Francis Youth Pages.
 - Being tagged in post- each Youth Leader/Helper- should update their personal **Facebook** account settings to 'review tagged requests before they are published'.
 - Each Youth Leader/Helper should have another leader to hold them accountable for their Facebook account and any inappropriate posting/commenting should be discussed.
- vii. However private or public we may think things are on **Facebook**, it must always be considered that it may never be as private as we think it is. As such any conversation or post made should be viewed as public and therefore treated with care as such. Any opinions expressed on **Facebook** by staff or as St Francis Church should not bring St Francis Church or any affiliated groups or persons into disrepute.
- ix. All personal accounts held by staff team or volunteers must be 'clean' i.e. they should contain nothing that can bring them or St Francis Church into disrepute.
- x. Allow young people to tag themselves in photos and de tag any in-appropriate material. All photos shared must have prior permission from parents/guardian.
- xi. All work using **Facebook** should be done within reasonable hours.

Facebook Messenger

- all communication via facebook messenger must be done in line with the above guidelines in mind. Messages should not be sent between one young person and one young person as much as possible. Best practice in this case is to include another leader in messages and if appropriate another young person. If this is not appropriate, then potentially Facebook messenger is not the best platform to communicate in that instance
- If someone is private messaged by a young person on **Facebook**, they must immediately report this to the Youth Work Leader and share it with another adult who is part of the Youth team.