

Video Conferencing with children

April 2020

In these extraordinary times, you may want to consider virtual meetups with your children's group. This document has been written for those working with children from age 5 upwards in primary school to the end of Year 6. If you are working with young people from Year 7 up and would like guidance on best practice for video conferencing with them, please see the document on the diocesan website.

Here is some advice and best practice on how to do this safely:

- Avoid the use of Skype / FaceTime – these are social media platforms and as such share contact details with all users, you may inadvertently connect children up with other people as an unintended consequence.
- Instead use a video conferencing platform such as Zoom: <https://zoom.us/> This is free to use giving you meeting lasting 40 mins max, or a paid for account allows you to host longer sessions. Users only need to have an email address to set up an account. However, please be aware of the following guidance issued by the national CofE safeguarding team:

Do not make meetings or classrooms public. In Zoom, there are two options to make a meeting private: require a meeting password or use the waiting room feature and control the admittance of guests. This has been switched on now and should come into effect immediately.

Do not share a link to a teleconference or classroom on an unrestricted publicly available social media post. Provide the link directly to specific people.

Manage screensharing options. In Zoom, change screensharing to "Host Only."

Ensure users are using the updated version of remote access/meeting applications. In January 2020, Zoom updated their software. In their security update, the teleconference software provider added passwords by default for meetings and disabled the ability to randomly scan for meetings to join. The latest app is being installed and reported by Zoom.

- **Do not record.** Most video conferencing software allows for the session to be recorded – this is an option for the host of the meeting only. Avoid doing this, as you would need separate permission for data capture.
- Use of this is beyond the normal running of your group and therefore needs explicit permission before use in the following ways:
 - You must have PCC approval – speak to your vicar, churchwarden, standing committee or PCC group to discuss and minute that this is happening – why not trial a video conference with some of these people first?! This does not need to be a complicated process.

- You need parental consent – set up an email which explains what you are doing, the date and time of the video conference session, which children’s leaders are participating and what you roughly will be doing.
- Use parents/carers email address to send the meeting invite to as this ensures parents/carers are aware that it is happening and can set up the children to access the session.
- Make it clear to the parent/ carer that they have to be present at all times during the session with the children, they need to make themselves seen at the beginning and end of the session. They can then go into the background, but you need to know they are there and they need to know what responsibility they have as the adult who is present.
- Ask for a reply as a form of consent and keep these emails in a separate folder. You may also want to do a test video call with just parents before you start.
- We advise these conference calls take place at the normal or as close to the regular meeting time as possible.
- Usual group rules apply in line with National Safeguarding practice including with regards safer recruitment and keeping a register.
- At least 2 safely recruited children’s leaders who usually have contact with the group should be present.
- Ensure leaders are live before children arrive.
- If new children want to join the group, they should have ‘normal’ group consent forms filled in as well... you will want them to come to the real group anyway when it re-forms.
- If you are recruiting new leaders for this group, then a safer recruitment process must be followed before they can participate.

If you would like a copy of a consent form for video conferencing with children, please email karenbeal@manchester.anglican.org

Code of Conduct and other considerations for leaders involved

Appropriate behaviour for leaders should be followed as you would expect in the usual children’s group setting, it might be worth a discussion with your leaders around this before the meeting happens. Also;

- Meeting invitations are only sent to private groups of named individuals.
- Only video in a family room. No bedrooms please!
- Everyone should be fully dressed in daytime clothes.
- If a child is not in daytime clothes or not in a family room the leader as the host can stop that child/ren’s video until they change and move rooms, then they can re-enter the group.
- As well as the video interface, there is usually space to write comments and participants can screen share too – consider use of this facility in a creative way.

- Be aware of and sensitive to technical difficulties! There can be issues with speakers and microphones! Use the software with leaders first to try and sort out any difficulties
- DO NOT RECORD
- As always, be inclusive – are there any young people from your group who would struggle to participate in this way, what extra support can be put in place for them?

Code of Conduct for Children and parents involved

- An adult must be present in the room with the child/ren at all times, available to help them with the technology, seen at the beginning and end of the session so leaders are aware they are there and can be out of view during the session.
- The child/ren must always be in a daytime family room when participating in the session, not in a bedroom or visiting other rooms in the house with a mobile device.
- The child/ren and adults must always be in daytime clothes
- Video may be turned off and the session accessed via audio only.
- Please try to keep your microphone muted as much as possible during the session. We know that the child/ren will be excited and that many (but not all) will want a chance to speak, so we will be practising good turn taking.

Alongside this document, please refer to the guidelines for using Social Media (Section 12) in the Parish Safeguarding Handbook which as a diocese we are using as our Safeguarding Policy. Follow this link to the handbook

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/201910/ParishSafeGuardingHandBookAugust2019Web.pdf>

Please get in touch with any further questions or issues and I will endeavour to assist or point you to someone who can.

Karen Beal, Diocesan Children's Officer

Abbey Clephane-Wilson, Diocesan Safeguarding Officer

With huge thanks for the initial work undertaken by Emma Pettifer, Diocese of Worcester