

A Brief Guide to Using Social Media for Leaders & Helpers



Social Media ...

... allows users to create rather than just consume online content – upload photographs, updates, comments etc. The digital landscape has changed so much in the last few years and will continue to do so as technology develops. The Church of England’s Digital Charter for using social media has been created to reflect our values and help Christians to live out their calling to share the good news of Jesus Christ:

Be safe	Be respectful
Be kind & honest	Take responsibility
Credit others	Disagree well
Be a good ambassador	Follow the rules

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/digital-charter>

For many young people there is little distinction between their ‘on’ and ‘offline’ worlds and excessive restrictions ‘online’ can lead them to taking greater risks to get around these. The world of social media changes rapidly. Keep up to date at websites such as

<https://saferinternet.org.uk/>
<https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/>

The PCC must approve the use of social media and mobile phones by the church and appoint a named person to monitor church accounts on their behalf.

Sexting is ... the sending or posting of sexually suggestive images, including nude or semi-nude photographs via mobiles or over the internet - always refer to your Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator and the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer. The sharing of sexual imagery of people under 18 by adults constitutes child sexual abuse and must also be reported to the Police.

Using Images

Images – photos or films – are sensitive personal data - you need consent to use and store them.

Ensure images and posts are regularly updated and remove ‘old’ images

Think *Who? Why? What?* before using images of under 18s online. Under 18s should be fully clothed, not in school uniform and not named.

Store securely – locked cabinet or protected file. Use church, *not personal*, devices to take and store images.

Communicate clearly any ‘rules’ about taking their own images to attendees at an event – and have procedures to respond to and manage any concerns.

Consent

Update consent at least annually. Over 17s with capacity can give consent. 13-16 year olds – get consent from young person (with capacity) and parent. Under 13s – parents must give consent.

DO NOT use images of adults who lack the capacity to give informed consent – no one else can give consent on their behalf.

Wide-angle, group images in a public space – individual consent not needed - but make participants aware that images will be taken and for what purpose. Those who freely gather for a group photo have given their implied consent by virtue of gathering.

Be honest, transparent, consistent, accountable, vigilant

When using social media for church:

DO

- ✓ Maintain appropriate boundaries
- ✓ Think before you post – social media is ‘public’ and can be traced back to you
- ✓ Behave online as you would offline
- ✓ Avoid online ‘lone working’ e.g. 1:1 chat
- ✓ Use ‘official’ church or group accounts/phones where possible – keep private media separate
- ✓ Obtain consent

DO NOT

- Harass, stalk or post inappropriate material
- Allow content to contain, or link to, harmful, libellous, illegal, bullying or abusive material
- Accept or invite young people as ‘friends’ who know you as a ‘church leader’

For more information on working safely see The Church of England’s Safer Environment & Activities Guidance and Code of Safer Working Practice at <https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/policy-and-practice-guidance>

If you become aware of inappropriate/harmful posts:

DO

- ✓ Take seriously, keep calm, accept without judgement
- ✓ Make contact offline to respond to disclosures
- ✓ Let them know who you must tell to help stop the abuse

DO NOT

- Show shock or disbelief
- Respond online
- Push the person into giving details of the abuse – your role is NOT to investigate
- Ask direct or leading questions – this could be harmful to the investigation
- Jump to conclusions or use words the person has not already used

Respond

- Save and download to hard copy any inappropriate material – posts, images, messages etc
- Only discuss what they have told you with others on a ‘need to know to keep a child safe’ basis – and not with others who should not be involved (friend/colleague/partner)
- Never comment on or alert the alleged abuser – or anyone else who may tell them

Record

- **ALWAYS** make a record of what the person has told you and pass it, with any saved posts, messages, images etc to your Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator
- Keep the record factual – who, why, what, where, when, how – sign and date it
- If you can, agree with the person that your record is accurate

Report

NEVER promise to keep a secret – but always maintain confidentiality

ALWAYS report any concerns, disclosures and allegations however 'small' they may seem

TELL your Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator ...



... or Vicar, or when the concern is about them/you can't get in touch with them/you don't want to tell anyone at your church, tell the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer.

If you need immediate advice and can't wait to get in touch with any of the above call the duty social care team or police on 101

If a situation is not safe and someone is in danger or needs immediate help call the police on 999

**Ensure you know how to contact your Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator, Vicar
Police and Local Authority Social Services**

Other Useful Contacts:

Diocesan Safeguarding Officer:	07324 993844	Elder Abuse:	https://wearehourglass.org/action-elder-abuse-now-hourglass
Domestic Abuse:	0808 2000 247	NSPCC:	https://www.nspcc.org.uk/
Samaritans:	116 123	ChildLine:	0808 11 11