



# **City Church Youth E-Safety Acceptable Use Policy**

**May 2016**



## City Church Youth E-Safety Acceptable Use Policy .

City church's is committed to taking all necessary steps to ensure the youth ministry is E-safety aware and competent. E-Safety is the collective term for safeguarding involving the use of mobile phones, computers (including laptops, netbooks, tablets) and other electronic devices including games consoles, to communicate and access the internet, emails, text messages, instant messaging, social networking sites and other social media. It is necessary to be aware that those who wish to abuse young people often start with electronic communications and then attempt to lure young people into an unprotected face to face meeting.

### Introductory Information

Today safeguarding embraces interaction online as well as traditional offline communications. We should be teaching young people how to stay safe online as well as offline and we need to be informed in order to help young people to navigate the online environment using new digital technologies and social media safely.


### Email

Vulnerable people can find it easier to communicate via email rather than talking face-to-face. They may therefore share more personal or sensitive information about themselves or someone else than if talking one-to-one. General advice and support may be offered by email but no more – counselling must be carried out by those qualified to do so.

### Texting

This is probably the most used method of communication amongst children and young people – 33% of 7-8 year olds have a mobile phone rising to 90% of 11-16 year olds; texts can be sent anywhere and at any time and an immediate response can be received. This form of communication is, however, difficult to monitor; youth team using this method of communication must be accountable for what is said. It would be advisable for a youth worker who has to communicate often using this method to be supplied with a church mobile phone. Itemised bills will then provide for accountability. The limits as to the usage of texts and the responsibilities associated with this form of communication must be made clear to workers.

'**Sexting**' (the act of sending sexually explicit messages or photographs, primarily between mobile phones) has become a concern amongst young people and adult leaders should remain vigilant and report any instances of this immediately, including it in their teaching /curriculum wherever possible. Once made public the 'sexts' are very difficult to remove. Apart from causing acute



embarrassment and distress, a recent change in the law now makes it a criminal offence to send explicit photos – even of oneself.

Young people need to understand that they could be charged with child pornography and be put on the sex offenders register for sending explicit photos of themselves or anyone on their phone.

### **Social media sites**

Social media sites and forms of electronic communication such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Instant Messenger, are constantly evolving. It is important for youth staff and helpers to keep in touch with how young people are communicating and to use these new forums when appropriate and having applied the principles below. In particular, youth helpers should always consider accountability and whether the form of electronic communication they use can be traced. For this reason, Snapchat, for example, would be inappropriate. If a youth worker is in doubt about the suitability of a form of communication, he/she should always ask those leading the team.

### **Cyber bullying**

Cyber bullying is no different from ordinary bullying except the child in question uses digital technologies to bully another. If an adult bullies a child however, it is defined as cyber-stalking and is taken even more seriously. Cyber bullying may involve the use of visual images, texts, phone calls and hits on social networking profiles.

### **Online Grooming**

Someone making contact with a child with the motive of preparing them for sexual abuse either online or offline. Someone who grooms a child is breaking the law.



## **The Scope of This Policy**

This City Church Youth E-Safety Acceptable Use Policy is intended to inform and equip Youth Staff and Volunteers on the acceptable use of online and social media forms.

### **This policy aims to:**

Empower Youth staff and leaders to use social media and online contact as a tool for communication and the transfer of information;

Empower Youth staff leaders to model good practice in their own online;

Equip Youth staff and leaders to use social media and related tools in an appropriate and effective manner;

Keep staff, leaders and youth safe in online usage.

**This policy is intended to be followed in conjunction with City Church's Safeguarding Policy.**



## Key Principles for Youth Staff and Leaders

You are modelling how to use online and social media to youth. It is part of how you disciple young people.

### **Consider:**

How can you demonstrate a Christ-like life online?

What uses or behaviours reflect this?

Then they can model their usage on yours.

Do not write or post anything to a youth (or anyone) that you wouldn't be happy for others to read.

Accountability and responsibility are of paramount importance.

### **DO**

#### **General**

Refer to your notable information update provided by the Youth Team to ensure you have parental permission before making any form of social media or text contact.

Be sure to use a style which will suit the needs of the whole group.

Keep texting and messaging to appropriate times of day - after 8am and before 9pm.

When signing off messages, use a friendly but not over-familiar or personal tone.

Use 'x' or 'Xx' or similar smiley faces if a young person of your own gender has initiated this practice, but DO NOT initiate this yourself or exceed this – the maximum we would ever send would be 'Xx'.

#### **Social media**


Use social media: it's a great way of being in touch with young people. Use social media to make arrangements.

Follow Youth on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter and encourage your youth small group to do so.

These are powerful tools and can help a lot of young people to connect with the ministry of the church. It is also a great way for the youth to connect with their friends and makes it easier for them to invite these friends to events.

Having gained permission from one of the Youth Staff team, use the #CityChurch hashtag for posting images of the youth ministry from Instagram if they are appropriate to use.

This will engage the youth in the wider life of the church. Add the small group you lead as a group on Facebook (if you'd like to).



It can be really affirming to receive an invitation from a leader. Make sure your communication is clear and unambiguous. Social media and online communication are best for information rather than conversation.

For example, they are for reminders and invitations about what's going on at Youth. Do consider Skyping or Google Hang Outs with youth who are away for any length of time.

But again, apply appropriate boundaries. If they are under 16, permission needs to be gained from parents for one-to-ones on Skype, as you would for one to-ones in person.

Keep Facebook contact visible where possible – i.e. posting on a young person's wall is preferable to in-boxing as it is more visible and, therefore, easily accountable.

Make sure your privacy settings are in place. Talk with your leader about the contact you are having with young people online.

### **Mobile phone**

Have a password/pass code on your phone.

Be aware of who else has access to your phone and what information, such as phone numbers and e-mail addresses, might be accessible.

Use group texts as a means of passing on information - be sure to use a style which will suit the needs of the whole group.

### **Sexting**

Be prepared to talk about sexting in the wider conversation about relationships. Make it clear to young people that a recent change in the law now makes it a criminal offence to send explicit photos – even of oneself. Young people need to understand that they could be charged with child pornography and be put on the sex offenders register for sending explicit photos of themselves or anyone on their phone. Explain it is illegal to hold or take indecent images of anyone under the age of 18, even if the pictures are not shared (“sexted”).

In this area it is even more important to ‘Think before you post’- once the information is out there is it very difficult, if not impossible to remove.

Encourage your small group to ‘Think before they post’ in all forms of social media.

## **DON'T**

Promise confidentiality.

Invite the youth to be part of your social life by allowing access to your friends or photos.

Add young people who are not in your direct pastoral remit – keep social media contact to the year group you lead.

Exceptions to this can be discussed with the Leader of City Church..

Post photos of young people without asking them first. The young person should post the photo, not you.

Post photos of young people whose parents have stated that they don't want images of their child being used.

Take photos of young people (but do let them have fun taking photos of you, if they want to.)

Tag young people. This is their choice not yours.

Encourage or foster exclusivity in communications either wittingly or unwittingly.

Get into deep and meaningful chats online or by text.

Use snapchat, as no record of communication can be traced.

## **Concerns**

Communication and behaviour online should be no different from offline and/or in person. If you feel uncomfortable about any communication or behaviour, whether it be online or offline, contact the leader of City Church or the Safeguarding Officer immediately.

### **Matters for concern may include:**

What has been said by a young person suggests they are in danger or at risk (NB – you need to take immediate action – see “What to do” below).

The content of messages/e-mails suggests some form of abuse (NB – you need to report your concerns as soon as possible, within 24 hours at the latest).

You are concerned by the mental well-being of a young person (again, act quickly).

The content of what a young person has said online or by text seems inappropriate.

Inappropriate images of youth or leaders have been shared.

A young person has become too dependent on you through frequent and extended online, text or face-to-face contact.

A young person is hiding their emails or texts (could be an indication of online grooming).

A young person is being contacted by unknown adults or receiving gifts from people they don't know (could be an indication of online grooming).

### **Overuse/ Addiction:**

Research suggests that obsessive internet use, including excessive gaming, sexual preoccupations and emailing/texting could be recognised as a clinical disorder.

### **What to do if you are concerned**

If you become concerned about the content of conversations on social network sites, you should take the following actions:

#### **DO NOT CLOSE DOWN THE CONVERSATION**

This will potentially lose any evidence. If you believe a young person to be in danger or at risk, call 999. If you are not sure, seek online advice. Inform the leader of City Church /Safeguarding Officer immediately. Ensure you preserve any 'paper trails'.

If necessary copy and paste any conversations and have these witnessed, signed and dated.

Save any instant messages or texts that might relate to a cause for concern to a password encrypted file for Leader.

Seek help and advice – seek help and advice from CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre).

## **The role of City church leader and safeguarding officer in supporting you**

### **We undertake to:**

Help you to work this policy into your relationships with the youth – through training and ongoing catch-ups. Ask you regularly which young people you have contact with online and offline. Challenge you, if we feel that something on your social media is inappropriate or doesn't reflect the Christ-like modelling we are striving for. Support you in and through any incidents.

Revise and update this policy annually.

Incorporate this policy into the ethos of the youth work

### **Agreed by**

..... **dated** .....



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## Useful links for education and training



<http://www.internetmatters.org/issues/sexting/>

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