

St John's Youth Communication and Media Policy

The use of social media, phones and internet are part of everyday life for young people. When used effectively and safely they can be extremely effective tools to help connect, build relationships, organise events and inspire youth. These methods of communication can be efficient and easily accessed for most but it is important that safeguards are put in place to ensure safety and accountability for both the young people and youth workers.

The following guidelines relate to communication between youth workers and youth using internet and phones. They are designed to clarify the necessary boundaries and create accountability to safeguard both the youth worker and the young people.

This policy lists all the ways that we will communicate with young people, and our guidelines within those methods.

Youth Team communicating with young people in these ways are safely recruited and have read and signed St John's Code of Conduct in which they agree to always operate within the guidelines produced by the church for safeguarding young people. They have read this policy and agreed to operate within it.

The aim of this policy is to promote "visible" communication. This means that in the majority of cases, communication should take place in an open forum. Safeguarding policies promote that one to one conversations with Young People happen in full sight of others, and therefore written communication should follow the same basic principle.

This policy has been updated in 2021, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, where the majority of youth work has been required to transfer to online medium.

Texting and Messaging

- Texting is used predominantly for group texts and communication should show that it is a group text – i.e. “Hi everyone”
- Individual texts can be sent between the Youth Pastors and young people and official mentors and mentees. These must be available to be shown at request. These are for short, general check ins or one off events such as well-wishes for birthdays/exams/events etc.
- Conversations exceeding this will be kept recorded and shared with other leaders. This may happen in mentoring situations, and in these cases messages will be saved and written up. If there is any form of safeguarding concern these messages must be kept, recorded and shared with the Youth Pastors or directly with Penny Miller as Safeguarding Officer.
- Any group messages will contain at least two Youth Team members, and do not need to be recorded in the same way as communication is not one to one.
- These guidelines are to be followed within any form of media that allows texting and messaging.

Audio/Video Calling

- Phone call conversations, and video calling applications will generally not be used, though there may be times such as during an event or in arranging meetings where it is appropriate.
- In the case where conversations of this nature exceed these circumstances, the team member will make a written record and place it in their shared folder as with texts and messages. The written record should detail when the conversation took place and a general summary of it, as with records of mentoring meet-ups.

Instagram

- We have a St John’s Youth Instagram account, the username is sjhwyouth. This may follow and be followed by Young People.
- Young People may follow members of the Youth Team’s accounts.
- Youth Team may follow Young People’s accounts, as long as the Young Person is also followed by the main youth account.
- Youth Team will not respond to direct messages from Young People from personal accounts.
- The main St John’s Youth account, operated by Jamie Blake and Emma-Jane Stapleton, may respond to direct messages from Young People.
- Comments may be left on images between Young People and Youth Team as they are publicly visible.
- Youth Team will not post or tag images of Young People on their personal accounts.

Snapchat

- Youth Team will not engage with Young People on Snapchat.

WhatsApp

- There may be cases in which we will use WhatsApp to communicate with youth. As WhatsApp is a messenger app, the guidelines here will mirror the Texting and Messaging section.
- We host a few key group chats, including Older Youth, Younger Youth, and Alpha groups. These groups will have at least two DBS checked admins to lead and moderate conversation.

Facebook

- Youth Team and Young People may be friends on Facebook.
- Comments may be left on images and posts between Young People and Youth Team as they are publicly visible.
- The messaging services follow the same guidelines as outlined in the Texting and Messaging section.

YouTube

- We have a St John's Youth YouTube account, called St John's Youth.
- Youth Team and Young People may subscribe to each other's accounts, meaning that YouTube posts are visible.
- Comments may be left on videos posted, and YouTube profiles between Youth Team and Young People, as these are publicly visible.
- The messaging services follow the same guidelines as outlined in the Texting and Messaging section.

Online Streaming Services

- The streaming of youth services and worship nights will happen via the Church Online platform.
- During the service, both team and young people will be able to chat publicly via the platform.
- The use of audio and images of any young people used in the service will be with permission and a completed registration form stating this permission formally.

Other Social Media

- Social Media outside of what's detailed in this policy should not be used. Reviews of this policy will be made when necessary in order to keep up to date with the most popular social media platforms.