

July 2021

# **POLICY FOR THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA, EMAIL AND MOBILE PHONES**

## **PARISH OF HERTFORD ST ANDREW**

(Please also see our Guidelines and Risk Assessment for Video Conferencing 2021)

This Policy was adopted at a  
Parochial Church Council meeting held remotely on July 12<sup>th</sup> 2021

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Rev. Alan Stewart

## **The Role of the PCC**

The PCC must approve the use of social media and mobile phones by the church. Where there are Facebook and other social media groups set up on the church's behalf, the PCC must ensure there is a **named person** to whom all workers are accountable. Church approved social media groups shall only be used to promote and support church activities and events.

The named person must be a church officer and should be aware of the account name and password so that they can at any time log on to the account to monitor the communications. The named person should be proactive in fulfilling this role. Social Media accounts managed by church officers are listed in the following table:

<b>Social Media Account</b>	<b>Named person</b>
Church Facebook page	Philippa Probert – Church Administrator
TMM Facebook page	Tracy Plumpton – Youth Worker
TMM Instagram	Tracy Plumpton – Youth Worker
Sele Messy Church Facebook page	Tracy Plumpton – Youth Worker
Shake Facebook page	Tracy Plumpton – Youth Worker
Shake Instagram	Tracy Plumpton – Youth Worker
WhatsApp group – Parish Support	Catherine Sleath – Parish Safeguarding Officer
WhatsApp group – St Andrew's NEWS	Catherine Sleath – Parish Safeguarding Officer
WhatsApp group – St Andrew's SOCIAL	Catherine Sleath – Parish Safeguarding Officer
WhatsApp group - Shake	Tracy Plumpton – Youth Worker
WhatsApp group – TMM parents	Tracy Plumpton – Youth Worker
WhatsApp group – TMM small groups	Tracy Plumpton – Youth Worker

Communications must be shared with the named person. Church officers remain bound by professional rules of confidentiality. Where there is concern that a young person or adult is at risk of abuse, or they themselves pose a risk of abuse to others, safeguarding procedures must always be followed.

## **Procedures when communicating with young people**

Young people communicate primarily through social media, email and mobile phone and it is essential for our ministry that we engage with them effectively and safely. Social media is continually changing and these guidelines will be reviewed and updated annually.

'Young people' are defined as those in school years 7 to 13 or equivalent. Where a young person reaches the age of 18 before leaving our youth work provision it is good practice to adhere to this policy. Children in year 6 and below should not normally be communicated with using social media or mobile phones.

## **TMM Consent Forms**

Parents and guardians will be given the option to consent to the following:

- Photos to be taken by a designated photographer at youth event and then used in official St Andrew's publications, our Facebook Page, the church website and displays.
- Young people may have email contact with staff and volunteers in accordance with these guidelines.

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- Young people may make and receive calls and texts to and from staff and volunteers in accordance with these guidelines.
- Young people may connect to their group's Facebook page.

#### For all forms of communication

Communication should not usually take place with young people before 7.30 am after 9.30pm or on staff members' days off. Note this doesn't mean staff and volunteers have to be available to young people at all other times.

Young people should be advised that, whilst staff and volunteers will exercise appropriate discretion in dealing with the substance of communication, they cannot promise confidentiality.

#### Emails

- Once permission is given, staff and some volunteers (small group leaders, mentors and group leaders) may hold email addresses for young people in their groups.
- Emails should be short and usually be a one-off communication to arrange a meeting or remind young people to attend an event.
- Emails should be kept on file, so that they can be traced if necessary in accordance with Hertford St Andrew's guidance on record keeping in parishes.
- Conversations should not be by email. Staff and volunteers should arrange to meet in person, although never alone, with a young person if the young person would like to talk.
- If an email raises any child protection concerns, the line manager and Parish Safeguarding Officer should be informed as soon as possible.
- When a volunteer leaves the youth work team, the young people's email addresses should be removed from their personal address book.
- Staff should only email using their work account and not personal email accounts.

#### Phone calls, Texting, instant messaging, Whats App, etc.

- The Youth Worker for St Andrew's has been supplied with a mobile phone dedicated for work purposes. The work phone number is the only number that young people are given. Texts or conversations that raise concerns should be saved and passed on to the Parish Safeguarding Officer.
- Once permission is given, staff and some volunteers (small group leaders, mentors and group leaders) may hold mobile phone numbers of the young people in their groups.
- Text communication should be short and usually be a one off communication to arrange a meeting or remind young people to attend an event.
- Staff and volunteers should use an appropriate tone; friendly but not over-familiar or personal. While communications should be warm and friendly, they should not suggest or offer a special relationship.
- Staff and volunteers should only give personal contact details that are within the public domain of St Andrew's, including their mobile phone number. All staff working with young people should only use their work phone. Volunteers should only text from private phones as an exception.

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- Conversations should not be had over texts. Staff and volunteers should arrange to meet in person, although never alone, with a young person if the young person would like to talk.
- Staff and volunteers may have phone calls with young people, but these should be short.
- If a disclosure is made that raises a safeguarding concern, verbatim notes should be made as soon as possible. This information should be reported to the line manager and Parish Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible and the records kept on file for a term in accordance with the Hertford St Andrew's guidance on record keeping in parishes.
- When a member of staff or volunteer leaves the youth work team, young people's numbers should be removed from private phones and any other digital or written record, and work phones should be returned to St Andrew's for secure storage.

## **Social Media**

### Instagram

The most effective way of communicating with the young people who currently attend TMM is through an Instagram group chat. This group chat is managed as follows:

- Young people follow the St Andrew's Youth Worker TMM Instagram account which is a private account. The account is only used for information relating to TMM.
- Youth worker does not follow the young people on Instagram.

### Snapchat or similar apps

- Staff and volunteers should not connect with young people on Snapchat
- Staff and volunteers should not befriend/follow/message/or post photos of young people on Snapchat or similar apps.

### Facebook

Schools and secular youth work policies recommend that an adult should not be friends with an under 18 on Facebook. St Andrew's accepts this recommendation. Private messaging is not permitted.

- Volunteers and staff should not be friends on Facebook with an under 18 where their contact has been established through their role as a staff member or volunteer.
- Once a young person has left our youth work provision at 18 it is then the volunteer or staff member's choice whether to be a Facebook friend with them.
- Each group may have a Facebook group. They should follow the policy on the group page.
- The group must be closed.
- The group must be monitored by at least two staff/volunteers who have admin rights.
- Young people, staff and volunteers can become a member of this group.
- Communications can occur openly through comments and posts on the page.
- Events can be posted on the page.
- Once permission is given, photos of events and young people can be posted on the page.

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- Privacy settings on photographs should be set to ensure that only members of the group see them.

### Twitter

- Young people can follow staff and volunteers on Twitter. Leaders should be aware as they tweet that they are a role model to young people.
- Direct private messages should not be sent or responded to as these are a hidden form of communication.
- Staff and volunteers must not follow young people on Twitter.

### YouTube or similar

- Staff and volunteers should not subscribe to any young person's YouTube channel.
- The group may have its own You Tube channel which should be a closed group site.
- The site can be used to post suitable material to encourage the young people in their journey of faith.