

# *Digital, Social Media and Online Communication with Children & Young People Policy & Procedures 2020*

Diocese of Waterford & Lismore

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## **Introduction: Rationale for Using Digital, Social Media and Online Communication with Children and Young People**

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Social media platforms increasingly dominate how people communicate, find information, and access news and entertainment. If your church does not have a presence online, people cannot interact with it online. Having no website or no social media account is like having no church building in a town: people cannot come to us if we are not there.

As our world moves into an increasingly digital and online environment, so have our ministries. This is particularly true for those ministering to young people as more young Catholics utilise a wide variety of online, digital and social media platforms as their preferred methods of communication. Indeed, these mediums are essential tools in our efforts to communicate, evangelize, and share the Gospel with the next generation. There is great potential in the utilisation of these platforms to aid Parishes / Youth Ministry in deepening relationships with young people, encouraging them in their faith, and promoting opportunities and events for the Diocese of Waterford & Lismore.

As Pope Benedict XVI reminded us: *“The new communications media, if adequately understood and exploited, can offer priests and all pastoral care workers a wealth of data which was difficult to access before, and facilitate forms of collaboration and communion that were previously unthinkable. If wisely used...the new media can become a valid and effective instrument for authentic and profound evangelization and communion. (The Priest and Pastoral Ministry in a Digital World: New Media at the Service of the Word, 2010)*

However, social media involves challenges for both young people and those who minister to them. The Diocese of Waterford & Lismore acknowledges that there may be potential risks that these platforms can pose to both our young people and to our Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry personnel. The Church ministry will always respect the dignity and rights of children. Children and young people must be protected from all forms of online abuse, including such activities as online bullying, grooming and sexting. Thus, transparency, prudence and professionalism must guide our digital communication and online interactions with young people. In this way, we can improve ministry effectiveness while ensuring the privacy and safeguarding of everyone involved.

### **2.0 Guidelines for Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry Using Social Media Platforms with Children and Young People (Under 18).**

- In Ireland under the Child Care Act 1991, the Children Act 2001 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is defined as anyone under the age of 18.
- Diocesan policy around safeguarding applies in your online communications with children, young people and vulnerable adults, as it does in face-to-face settings.
- The digital age of consent in Ireland is 16 years.

#### **2.1 Facebook / Messenger** Age rating 16+ (Digital Age of Consent in Ireland is 16 years)

*Facebook is a platform where you can post text, images and videos to your “wall”, as well as promote events. Messenger is the direct messaging (DM) function of Facebook. It has a separate app.*

- Any Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry Facebook account must be used for Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry purposes only and not as a Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry personnel personal account.
- All ministry with young people through Facebook must be in line with the Agreed Code of Conduct for Leaders and be appropriate:

- The Facebook account must not be utilised between 10pm and 8am.
- One to one communication with young people must be kept in the public eye to safeguard both the young person and the worker. Communications must be done through the 'wall' function and it is advised that this is utilised to reply to any private messages which young people may have sent to the page.
- Messenger must not be used for individual or group chats.
- All messages must be saved in Messenger (both incoming and outgoing).
- If you are using emojis, they should reflect the information you are communicating. Never use emojis which could be misinterpreted (hearts, lips etc). If in doubt, do not use. Acronyms should not be used as they may be misinterpreted or misconstrued by Parents / Guardians or young people e.g. LOL, YOLO.
- Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry personnel are not permitted to direct message or accept/send friend requests to young people from their own personal Facebook account.
- Young people are free to like or follow Parishes / Diocesan Youth Ministry on Facebook, however Parishes / Youth Ministry cannot 'follow' any young person back. The accounts the Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry can 'follow' must be organisations or official Facebook accounts relevant to the youth ministry e.g. Holy Family Mission, Youth 2000

## 2.2 Instagram Age rating 13+ (Digital Age of Consent in Ireland is 16 years)

*Instagram is a free photo and video sharing app available on iPhone and Android. People can upload photos or videos to our service and share them with their followers or with a select group of friends. They can also view, comment and like posts shared by their friends on Instagram. It has a direct messaging (DM) function.*

- Any Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry Instagram account must be used for Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry purposes only and not as a Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry personnel personal account.
- All ministry with young people through Instagram must be in line with the Agreed Code of Conduct for Leaders and be appropriate:
  - Photos uploaded onto the Instagram must be in line with the ethos and guiding principles of the Diocese of Waterford & Lismore.
  - The account is not to be utilised to showcase the Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry personnel's own interests.
  - All photos uploaded to Instagram should be stored as per Diocesan GDPR requirements.
  - The Instagram account is not to be utilised between 10pm and 8am.
  - Young people are free to 'follow' any Parishes / Youth Ministry on Instagram however Parishes / Diocesan Youth Ministry cannot 'follow' any young person back. The Instagram accounts that can 'followed' by Parishes / Diocesan Youth Ministry must be organisations or official Instagram accounts relevant to the youth ministry e.g. Net Ministries, Holy Family Mission, Youth 2000.
  - Comments should only be used for communication, not conversation.
  - If you are using emojis, they should reflect the information you are communicating. Never use emojis which could be misinterpreted (hearts, lips etc). If in doubt, do not use.

Acronyms should not be used as they may be misinterpreted or misconstrued by Parents / Guardians or young people e.g. LOL, YOLO.

- Appropriate 'hash tags' are allowed e.g. those related to youth ministry, liturgical seasons, scripture, prayer, saints, inspiring quotes #Christmas #praytherosary #preparetheway
- Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry personnel are not permitted to direct message or accept/send follow requests to young people from their own personal Instagram account.
- When posting "Stories" on Instagram, it is recommended to highlight the Story and bookmark it in the relevant section, so that all information that has been posted can be accessed at any time and not just for twenty-four hours.

- **Instagram Groups:**

- Instagram Groups allows you to create a specific group of Instagram users, and to send direct messages (DMs), pictures and videos within the group chat.
- When using Instagram group chats you should be aware that adding people to the group discloses their Instagram handle to the rest of the group, and the written joint consent of children/ young people and Parents / Guardians must be given for this.
- If the youth group is made up of both over and under 18's, a separate Instagram chat group should be set up for both age groups.
- At least two Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry vetted leaders must be part of an Instagram group chat.
- As a young person leaves the youth group, they should immediately be deleted from the Instagram group list.
- Young people should be given the option to unsubscribe from the Instagram group chat.
- Instagram also offers a Video Group Chat option, limited to 6 people. We recommend using Zoom as an online communications platform rather than this option. See separate policy on "Using an Online Communications Platform with Children and Young People", available on <https://www.waterfordlismore.ie/safeguarding-children/>
- Breaches of the Online Code of Conduct will result in the young person being removed from the group chat. Incidents should be recorded with as much detail as possible immediately after the meeting has ended and stored as per Diocesan GDPR requirements. Parents / Guardians are to be informed of the breach and consequences.

### **2.3 Use of Facebook / Instagram or YouTube "Live" by Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry**

*Live-streaming is a beneficial way of reaching out to those in your ministry, but be sure you have a clear purpose for the video and be well-prepared in advance. Be aware that when you go live on any platform, there is no going back to edit this footage – whatever you are streaming is happening in front of a live audience. Before using Facebook or Instagram / YouTube Live, clergy and other contributors, should be aware of the implications of doing so.*

- Written permission from a young person and their Parent / Guardian shall be obtained prior to any child or young person featuring in any Facebook / Instagram or YouTube video created on a Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry account. Any such consent should make it clear to the parent/guardian or young person, that their images/photographs will be shared on social

media and, therefore, that the parish or Diocese will no longer have control of those images and photos.

- Uploading a video to Facebook / Instagram / YouTube Live means that it is streamed on the internet. Depending on what settings you use, this may mean that anyone who subscribes to your Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry account may view the video. However, it is not necessarily confined to the account's friends / followers / subscribers.
- Once a live-streamed video is uploaded, the Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry loses control of that video. While it is possible to delete the video after broadcasting, if they are left on the Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry account, page or channel, they can be saved or shared by individuals who view them with their own friends, followers and / or subscribers.
- Live-streamed videos from Facebook / Instagram / YouTube Live should be deleted from the social media platform, unless there is a purpose for making them available after the livestream has ended e.g. catechesis / promoting an event / evangelization / encouraging prayer. When obtaining any consent, it should be made clear the period of time videos and photos will be left on a social media page. You should remember that, under data protection law, images of individuals can only be retained for as long as necessary.
- It is possible to block specific users from commenting / spamming on Facebook or Instagram Live for the duration of the feed, and to turn off live chat during a YouTube live stream or block certain words. If you choose not to do this, be aware that comments are not always complementary.

*Steps to taken when using social media in this way:*

- Facebook / Instagram / YouTube privacy settings offer options for private, friends and public. Ensure you select the appropriate setting for the live-stream.
- If you have not disabled live chat when using YouTube live stream, the account administrators must monitor the comments below any video posts.
- Set a time frame after which the video will be deleted / removed unless you choose to save it. Instagram live stories automatically delete after 24 hours unless you choose to save it to IGTV (Instagram TV) or download it to share to Facebook.

## **2.4 Twitter**                      Age rating 16+ (Digital Age of Consent in Ireland is 16 years)

*Twitter is a platform that allows users to write short posts. It also allows picture and video to be shared, and there is a direct messaging (DM) function.*

- Any Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry Twitter account must be used for Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry purposes only and not as a Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry personnel personal account.
- Tweets sent from this account must be in line with the ethos and guiding principles of the Diocese of Waterford & Lismore. It is not to be utilised to endorse or promote the Parish's / Diocesan Youth Ministry personnel's own interests.
- All 'tweets' must be saved in the Twitter feed and not deleted.
- All communication must be appropriate:
  - All communication with young people via Twitter must be done publicly and on the 'twitter feed'.

- The ability for young people to 'direct message' the Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry Twitter account must be disabled at all times.
- The Twitter account must not be utilised between 10pm and 8am.
- Young people are free to 'follow' Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry Twitter account however Parishes or Youth Ministry cannot 'follow' any young person back or comment, like or retweet any of their posts. The accounts the Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry can 'follow' must be organisations or official twitter accounts relevant to the youth ministry e.g. @Pope Francis, @Alpha.
- If you are using emojis, they should reflect the information you are communicating. Never use emojis which could be misinterpreted (hearts, lips etc). If in doubt, do not use. Acronyms should not be used as they may be misinterpreted or misconstrued by Parents / Guardians or young people e.g. LOL, YOLO.
- Appropriate 'hash tags' are allowed e.g. those related to youth ministry, liturgical seasons, scripture, prayer, saints, inspiring quotes, specific Youth Ministry challenge hashtags #Christmas #praytherosary #AshWednesday
- Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry personnel are not permitted to direct message or accept / send follow requests to young people from their own personal Twitter account.

## 2.5 Snapchat Age rating 16+ (Digital Age of Consent in Ireland is 16 years)

The use of Snapchat by any Diocesan Group/Parish/Youth Ministry Group is ***prohibited***. Snapchat is a picture and video sharing app with an ephemeral nature. This means that the pictures/videos taken and shared are only viewable for up to 10 seconds before they disappear from the recipient's phone. Images and messages cannot be saved on the app. Because of its nature it is impossible to safeguard the use of Snapchat, hence the decision to implement a no use policy in relation to this social media app.

## 2.6 WhatsApp Age rating 16+ (Digital Age of Consent in Ireland is 16 years)

*WhatsApp uses the internet to send messages, images, audio or video. Messages can be sent to individuals or groups.*

- WhatsApp can be a great tool for sending group messages between / to young people however written permission from a young person and their Parent / Guardian shall be obtained first.
- When using WhatsApp group chats you should be aware that adding people to the group discloses their mobile number, name and image (where individuals have an image) to the rest of the group, and the consent of children/ young people and Parents / Guardians must be given for this.
- The WhatsApp group can be set so that only the administrator of the account can send messages. This is the preferred setting. If you do need individual members of the group to be able to send messages, this feature can be turned on temporarily and turned off again. If group members are sending messages, it should be made clear that all messages are visible by all other members of the group. No personal details outside of the group business should be discussed over the WhatsApp platform.
- If the youth group is made up of both over and under 18's, a separate WhatsApp chat group should be set up for both age groups.

- At least two Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry vetted leaders must be part of a WhatsApp group chat.
- As a young person leaves the youth group, they should immediately be deleted from the group WhatsApp chat list.
- Young people should be given the option to unsubscribe / opt out of the WhatsApp group chat also and an alternative method of staying in contact should be provided to them.
- WhatsApp allows you to back up your chats, and this should be done through the designated Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry email account.
- WhatsApp has a “Disappearing Messages” setting, which when turned on by either person in a one-to-one chat or by Group Administrators, will make new messages disappear from the chat after seven days. Group Administrators should ensure this setting is disabled (turned off).

## 2.7 TikTok Age rating 13+ (Digital Age of Consent in Ireland is 16 years)

*TikTok is a new social media platform which allows users to create videos recorded in 15 seconds or less and share them across a community. Teens also enjoy competing in the different challenges which can be entered via the trending hashtags on the app.*

- TikTok in a ministry setting can potentially be used as a modern and engaging way to be part of the social media culture of teenagers today: by creating a sense of community by setting fun challenges for your Youth Group, or creating short videos with words of encouragement or mini-teachings.
- By default, all accounts are public and users must change their settings to private to determine who can see their videos.
- Users may be exposed to bad language and content of a sexual or otherwise inappropriate nature in their own TikTok stream, from accounts other than the Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry. It is not possible for the Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry to control this.
- It is strongly recommended to make Parents / Guardians aware of privacy controls and other settings available on TikTok and these can be found here: <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-us/tiktok-parental-guide>
- Users can comment on other videos, however users can block another user from seeing their video or commenting, and further restrictions are available within the App settings.
- Users can also spend a lot of time on TikTok, but Digital Wellbeing settings in the App allow the user to limit time spent on the App each day.
- As a relatively new App in social media, use of this TikTok will have to be reviewed regularly.
- All communication in the App must be appropriate:
  - Only designated Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry personnel should utilise it for specific ministry purposes.
  - TikToks created from a Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry account must be in line with the ethos and guiding principles of the Diocese of Waterford & Lismore. It is not to be utilised to endorse or promote the Parish's / Youth Ministry personnel's own interests.
  - Young people are free to 'follow' a Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry TikTok account however Parishes or Youth Ministry cannot 'follow' any young person back. The



accounts the Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry can 'follow' must be organisations or official TikTok accounts relevant to the ministry e.g. @youth\_2000\_ireland

- All TikTok videos must be saved in the TikTok App.
- Written Consent from a young person and Parents / Guardians must be sought for any TikTok challenge video being shared online with the Parish / Diocese Youth Ministry, along with the specified time frame until the video is deleted by the Parish / Diocese Youth Ministry.
- The TikTok account must not be utilised between 10pm and 8am.
- Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry personnel are not permitted to 'follow' young people from their own personal TikTok account or share their personal account information with them.

## **2.8 Blogging, Vlogging (video-based blogs) and Podcasts**

- Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry Blogs, Vlogs (video-based logs) and / or podcasts may be utilized for catechesis, encouraging prayer and spiritual growth, ministry event promotions, sharing relevant resources or evangelisation.
- Any Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry account used for ministry-based blogging or vlogging and / or podcasts must be used for Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry purposes only and not as a Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry personnel personal account or to promote / endorse the Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry's personnel own interests.
- Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry Blogs / Vlogs and / or podcasts must be in line with the ethos and guiding principles of the Diocese of Waterford & Lismore.
- Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry Blogs / Vlogs and / or podcasts shall never divulge personal information of young people being ministered to.
- Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry Blogs / Vlogs and / or podcasts shall be administered by the parish / diocesan agency and monitored by at least two designated adults. If a blog / vlog and / or podcasts has a "comment" function enabled, administrators shall monitor comments closely and react quickly should any comment turn inappropriate. Comments may also be disabled.

## **2.9 Youth Ministry Websites or Web pages**

- Parish / Diocesan Youth ministry webpages or websites shall be related to or an extension of the parish / diocesan website. If a parish website is not available, the youth ministry website shall be registered in the name of the parish.
- Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry webpages or websites may be utilized for catechesis, encouraging prayer and spiritual growth, ministry event promotions and coverage, sharing relevant resources or evangelisation.
- Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry websites or webpages must be in line with the ethos and guiding principles of the Diocese of Waterford & Lismore.
- A minimum of two adults within the Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry shall have full access to the website account.
- Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry websites or webpages shall not contain personal photographs, personal information, or contact information about young people.

- Written permission from a young person and their Parent / Guardian shall be obtained prior to posting any photographs, videos, or other identifying information about young people on a Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry webpage or website.

## **2.10 Online Video and Music Sharing Accounts: e.g. YouTube, Vimeo, Spotify, iTunes**

- Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry digital online video and music accounts may be utilized for catechesis, event promotions, sharing resources, encouraging prayer or evangelization. It is not to be utilised to endorse or promote the Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry personnel's own interests.
- Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry digital video and music uploaded, shared or recommended must be in line with the ethos and guiding principles of the Diocese of Waterford & Lismore.
- A minimum of 2 designated adults in the Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry shall have full access to / administrate the digital online video or music account.
- Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry channels or accounts shall not contain personal photographs, personal information, or contact information about young people.
- Written permission from a Parent / Guardian and young person shall be obtained prior to posting any photographs, videos, or other identifying information about young people in a Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry online video.
- If a video has a "comment" function enabled, administrators shall monitor comments closely and react quickly should any comment turn inappropriate. Comments may also be disabled.
- Comments should only be used for communication, not conversation.
- Young people are free to 'follow' or subscribe to a Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry video channel / music account, however Parishes or Youth Ministry cannot 'follow' (or subscribe to) any young person.
- The accounts / channels the Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry can 'follow' or subscribe to must be organisations or official accounts relevant to Youth Ministry e.g. Campa Mhuire Mháthair, Waterford & Lismore Diocese, Youth 2000 Ireland, Ascension Presents, Paving the Way Home.
- Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry personnel are not permitted to subscribe to young people from their own personal accounts or share their personal account information with them.

## **2.11 Email and Texts**

- Communication with individual children and young people (for example, asking them to attend a choir practice or a Zoom Meeting) should be done through their Parents / Guardians rather than directly to the children and young people.
- It is permissible to send messages (by text or email) to older adolescents who are still minors (16 and 17 year olds), under certain conditions:
  - The young people and their Parents / Guardians have given written consent
  - The messages come from Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry accounts
  - Copies of emails are sent to their Parents / Guardians
  - Individual email addresses are to be put in the Blind Carbon Copy (BCC) section so people cannot access each other's email addresses
  - A second leader must always receive a Carbon Copy (CC) of the email

- Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry emails and texts may be utilized for catechesis, event promotions, sharing resources, encouraging prayer or evangelization. They are not to be utilised to endorse or promote the Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry personnel's own interests.
- Texting / emailing should only be used for communication, not conversation.
- Only an officially designated Diocesan / Parish Youth Ministry email account or mobile number should be used to send emails / texts. Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry personnel should never use their own personal email account or provide a young person their personal contact details.
- Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry texts and / or emails must be in line with the ethos and guiding principles of the Diocese of Waterford & Lismore.
- Using bundled text and e-mail messaging, where the same message is sent to a group of young people, can minimise risks associated with this form of communication.
  - Written consent must be obtained from the young person and their Parent / Guardian prior to using this method of communication.
  - The contact details for a young people receiving such a message must not be visible to other recipients (use BCC function).
  - The young people's contact details must be stored securely as per Diocesan GDPR requirements.
  - All texts or email messages must clearly identify who has sent the message.
  - All text and email messages sent must include an opportunity for the young people to "unsubscribe" from receiving further text and email messages.
  - The texts and emails sent from this service must never contain any offensive, abusive or inappropriate language.
  - Care should be taken when communicating using text or email to ensure that the correct recipients receive the message.
- Texts or emails should never contain personal information about a child or young person.
- Do not respond to emails / texts from young people other than those directly related to Youth Ministry matters. Emails / texts should only be used for communication, not conversation.
- In the case of a breach of the Code of Conduct in the nature of emails / texts sent by young people follow the diocesan safeguarding policy and procedures, available on <https://www.waterfordlismore.ie/safeguarding-children/>
- In emergency circumstances where a call, text message or email has to be sent to a minor (for example, if a young person has become separated from the group), contact must be made with the Parent / Guardian to make them aware of the content.

## **2.12 Online Communication Platforms e.g. Zoom**

See separate policy on "Using an Online Communications Platform with Children and Young People", available on <https://www.waterfordlismore.ie/safeguarding-children/>

### 2.13 Netflix Party (Teleparty) App / Online “Movie Night”

- Netflix Party App provides an optional add-on to Netflix movie streaming to let groups watch a movie, synchronizing the movie playback allowing the entire group to watch it together. The app also provides a side-bar for group chats, for a real-time commentary (text only).
- However, the Netflix Party / Teleparty App, as of yet, does not provide any option to delete / hide inappropriate or offensive comments, or to remove a user from the Netflix party if they are in breach of the Code of Conduct. Therefore, Netflix Party **is not currently recommended** for Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry.

### 2.14 Data Protection Considerations of Using Social Media

Before using Social Media, youth ministry personnel, clergy and other contributors, should be aware of the implications of doing so. These include the following:-

- Uploading a photo or video to Facebook/Instagram/Twitter means that it is published on the internet. Depending on what settings you use, this may mean that anyone who subscribes to Facebook/Instagram may view the photo/video. It is not necessarily confined to your Facebook/Instagram “friends”;
- Once the photo or video is uploaded, the parish/Diocese loses control of that video. While it is possible to delete the video after broadcasting, if they are left on the parish’s Facebook/Instagram page, they can be shared or saved by individuals who view them. This is not just confined to the parish’s Facebook/Instagram “friends”.
- Videos of this nature should only be retained for as long as is necessary. Therefore, the videos should be deleted from the social media platform after a specified time;
- It is possible for viewers to make comments in relation to the video and post them on the Facebook/Instagram/Twitter page. These comments are not always complimentary!
- Those creating content for social media or internet posts, should be mindful of the background in any photo or video. In particular, be mindful of capturing images of any individuals who may not be aware their images are being taken.

*Steps to taken when using social media in this way*

- Check the Facebook/Instagram privacy settings of the page you are positing to. The settings dictate who can view the video. These are generally either: (i) everyone on Facebook/Instagram; (ii) the “friends” of the social media account. If you want to direct a particular video to specified individuals, it is also possible to pick the “friends” who you want to see it.
- Monitor the comments below any video posts;
- Set a time frame after which the video/photo will be deleted (unless required for archival reasons and communicated to the individuals in the video/photo beforehand);
- Consent is required where you are uploading videos or photos of third parties who can be identified from those photos or videos.

### 3.0 General Guidelines

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- Take responsibility for what you write or post, and assume everything is public. On the internet, everything is visible, and everything is stored. Nothing you say will be forgotten or hidden.
- Be careful when commenting or liking posts when using the Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry account, since anything you say can be seen as the official words of the Church / Parish or Diocese.
- Be transparent: identify yourself clearly and do not use pseudonyms. Young people must use their own Christian name as their user name (e.g. not a gaming name).
- There must be at least two administrators for each social media app to allow for rapid response, monitoring and updating.
- Be aware of privacy settings: Use secure passwords and do not click on links you are unsure about. Settings should allow for posts to be reviewed before being made public.
- Monitor Content / Comments: Postings to be monitored regularly by designated administrators. If the administrators deem comments (or other content) that are posted to the Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry social media accounts or pages, to be unsuitable or offensive, they must take action e.g. hiding, deleting or reporting comments, or blocking users. Reasons for the removal of comments / content should be explained to the person who posted the content and Parents / Guardians will be informed.
- Always comply with copyright laws and data protection requirements (see above) when posting anything on Diocesan social media accounts.
- Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry Leaders should **not**:
  - Gather or retain a young person's mobile phone number or email address other than for purposes of the event or activity.
  - Provide a young person with his or her own personal mobile phone number or email address.
  - Access the internet with a young person unless relevant to the Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry.
  - Befriend a young person on a social media website such as Facebook or Instagram.
  - Take photographs of young people other than for purposes associated with the event or activity and then only with their permission and that of their Parent / Guardian.
- It is requested that the "no tagging" option be set on all social media (including use of handles / profile names of young people).
- Be mindful of requesting people especially young people to join group video chats or share video content from their home, as some may feel uncomfortable with this. Certain platforms (e.g. Zoom) enable users to use generic backgrounds when sharing video content. Encourage people to choose this option where possible. Appropriate dress code must be adhered to e.g. pyjamas are not appropriate.
- Be careful when sharing content: read linked content thoroughly, or watch a video to the end so you know exactly what you are sharing.
- Maintain confidentiality: If telling a story about someone, including family members, ask yourself first, "Is this my story to tell?" Don't reveal personal details about others without their explicit permission.

- Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry apps should be updated, as required, to benefit from the latest security and privacy options.
- Participant's options should be limited to commenting only (if this feature is to be enabled) and not posting of pictures or videos.
- While anyone is free to create and maintain personal websites and social media content, church personnel of the Diocese of Waterford & Lismore should be mindful that even personal sites and posts must reflect Diocesan values.
- Young people should be informed who they contact if they have an issue while using Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry online platforms and social media.
- If there is a safeguarding concern, contact details for the Diocesan Safeguarding Office can be found on <https://www.waterfordlismore.ie/safeguarding-children/>. The Designated Liaison Person for Safeguarding in the Diocese of Waterford & Lismore is Mr Stephen Plunkett: (085) 165 1518, or can be directly reported to Tusla, Child & Family Agency: 051-301450 or An Garda Síochána: 051-305300.
- Any allegation, suspicion, concern or knowledge of child abuse will be reported in line with the Diocese of Waterford & Lismore's reporting procedures.
- Upon conclusion of the online ministry, a review should always take place to ensure that at all times risks were identified and managed and to evaluate whether the social media platform used, was fit for purpose.
- These policy, procedures and guidelines will be reviewed regularly and updated based on feedback and experience.

*Any relevant queries please contact [safeguarding@waterfordlismore.ie](mailto:safeguarding@waterfordlismore.ie)*

#### 4.0 Online Code of Conduct for Young People / Netiquette

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- **Be kind:** No judgmental attitudes, hate speech or bullying. Negative, hurtful or derogatory comments will not be tolerated. We work to encourage each other. The group should be a safe space for members to express themselves.
- **Respect others:** Respect the different opinions of everyone in the group and listen. Healthy debates are natural, but kindness is required. Keep discussions to the appropriate, designated time for discussion. Follow the instructions of the leader(s).
- **Respect privacy:** No photo-taking, screenshots or screen recordings of meeting. Do not share group codes or passwords with people outside the group. Do not tag other people in photos or posts on social media without their permission.
- **Be honest:** Make a leader aware if you are feeling uncomfortable due to a person or topic being discussed. If you need a break do not be afraid to ask.
- **Be prudent:** Being part of this group requires mutual trust. Authentic, expressive discussions make groups great, but may also be sensitive and private. The group forum is not a suitable place for anyone taking part to disclose that they themselves or someone they know is at risk of abuse. Should anyone have a safeguarding concern the Diocesan Safeguarding details can be found at <https://www.waterfordlismore.ie/safeguarding-children/>
- **Respect confidentiality and do not gossip:** if you are telling a story about someone, ask yourself, "Is this my story to tell?" Do not talk about other people without permission: this includes your family members. Always respect confidentiality: what is said in the group, stays in the group, unless there is a safeguarding concern.
- **Appropriate Dress Code and Surroundings:** Only use the online platform from an appropriate location i.e. bedrooms and bathrooms are not appropriate. Make sure people around you cannot be seen or heard on camera unless they are part of this group. Dress appropriately e.g. pyjamas are not appropriate.
- **Breach of the Code:** Anyone who breaks the rules or acts inappropriately while on the online platform will be removed from the meeting and Parents / Guardians will be informed.

## 1.2A (2) Conduct Agreement for Leaders working with Children and Young People in Online Ministry

"We require you to sign and agree to the following the Conduct Agreement for using  
(*name of setting*) social media communication platforms to ensure clear boundaries  
between you and the young people whom you are ministering to".

I agree -

- To keep my ministry with children / young people separate and not accept children, or their Parents / Guardians as 'friends' or "followers" on my personal page / account.
- To follow the Digital, Social Media and Online Communication with Children and Young People Policy & Procedures and not bring the Diocese of Waterford & Lismore into disrepute.
- To observe confidentiality by not discussing children and young people, Parents / Guardians unless there is a safeguarding risk.
- To consider how my social media conduct may be perceived by others and how this could affect my own reputation and that of the Parish / Diocese.
- To report any known breaches of the above to the Designated Liaison Person for safeguarding, Mr Stephen Plunkett and the social media administrator (*name here*)\_\_\_\_\_.
- To report any potential data protection breaches (i.e. unauthorised disclosure of personal data) to the parish priest or Diocesan secretary immediately.
- I understand I am in a position of trust and my actions could be misinterpreted by others and I am conscious of this when sharing information with others on a digital, social media or online communication platform / site belonging to the Parish / Diocese.

Name (**BLOCK CAPITALS**):

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Data Protection** - This form will be used to facilitate your participation in Youth Ministry. The form will be stored confidentially and will only be shared outside the parish/group where there is a legal obligation on the parish/group to do so. The information will be retained for as long as necessary in compliance with Safeguarding laws and policies. Your data will be processed under Articles 6 (1) (d), 6 (1) (f), 9 (2) (c) and 9 (2) (d) of the General Data Protection Regulation, 2016.

This form should only be used if the event/activity has the prior approval of either the Diocese or the local parish within the Diocese.