



## **E-SAFETY POLICY**

(Electronic communication and using the internet  
with children and young people)

**FURZEDOWN YOUTH CENTRE  
WELHAM ROAD  
LONDON  
SW16**

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## **Introduction**

Furzedown Youth Centre (FYC) recognises that social media, electronic communication and using the internet has become a key aspect of communicating, not just with young people but to the community as a whole.

Electronic communication should only happen with great care. This is because it is very hard to regulate the information that is shared, and to monitor the interactions between adults and young people through this medium.

All communication between children and adults, by whatever method, should take place within clear and explicit boundaries. Adults should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny.

If illegal material is identified, it should be reported to the police immediately and the Safeguarding Office should be made aware.

## **Use of shared computers and technology**

Within the youth work session, it may be appropriate to use games consoles or computers with interactive capabilities. Only permit age-appropriate games to be played, and establish what safeguards are built in to the console in relation to the possibility of communicating with other players. All volunteers, staff and Board members should consider also the values they are imparting through the games in use, particularly in relation to violence.

## **Email**

Any emails sent on behalf of FYC should only use the official FYC email account. They should be limited to sharing generic information, for example, to remind young people about meetings. If email is being used, session leaders, volunteers and Board members will ensure that they are accountable by copying each message to the Safeguarding Officer. It is important that workers use clear and unambiguous language to reduce the risk of misinterpretation, for example, avoiding inappropriate terms such as 'love' or using xxx when ending an email.

## **Instant Messaging (e.g. Snapchat, WhatsApp, Instagram)**

Instant messaging should be kept to an absolute minimum. Session Leaders, staff and Board members should save any and all conversations and keep a log stating with whom and when they communicated. This applies to communication both with children, young people and with adults at risk. Instant messaging should not be the primary means of communication between workers and those they are supporting.

## **Mobile Phones**

There is an official FYC phone. Any session leader, volunteer or Board member needing to use a phone for FYC purposes should use this where possible. Mobile phone use should primarily be for the purposes of information sharing. Workers should keep a log of significant conversations/texts.

Any texts or conversations that raise concerns should be passed on to the Safeguarding Officer. Workers should use clear language and should not use abbreviations like 'lol' which could mean 'laugh out loud' or 'lots of love'.

You should not take photos of children, young people or adults at risk unless permission is sought in advance and written consent for the image to be used has been obtained.

Photos should not be taken or stored on personal phones.

## **Social Media**

Individuals should not send private messages to children on social media.

All volunteers, staff and Board members should ensure that any communications on behalf of FYC are transparent and open to scrutiny.

Individuals should not accept 'friend' or 'following' requests from children on their personal accounts, nor seek to be 'friends' or a 'follower' of any child known to them in an FYC context.

### **Taking Videos and Photographs of Children**

Since the introduction of the Data Protection Act in 1998, churches must be very careful if they use still or moving images of clearly identifiable people. Previous legislation was reinforced through the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in May 2018. There are several issues to be aware of:

- Permission must be obtained, via the consent form, of all children who will appear in a photograph or video before the photograph is taken or footage recorded.
- It must be made clear why that person's image is being used, what you will be using it for, and who might want to look at the pictures.
- If images are being taken at an event attended by large crowds, such as a sports event, this is regarded as a public area and permission from a crowd is not necessary.
- Children and young people under the age of 18 should not be identified by surname or other personal details, including email, postal address or telephone number.
- When using photographs of children and young people, it is preferable to use group pictures.

### **Video Conferencing**

FYC recognise that video conferencing has become a valuable tool as we look at ways to meet together particularly at a time when we are not able to meet physically. There are many difference platforms available for this such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Skype, Google Meeting, FaceTime, Facebook Rooms and Google Duo. If it is deemed appropriate to use video conferencing, then we still apply our safeguarding policies and procedures:

It is important to ensure that there are always at least 2 youth workers in the call and that they are online first. Just as you would do usually if you have concerns about someone then follow the reporting procedure within FYC.

Do not be tempted to record your virtual youth group meeting. If you are following your usual safeguarding policy and procedures, then you do not need an added record. Keeping a record of what is said and done in this way presents an added challenge of:

- where this is subsequently stored
- parental and personal consent to the recording
- the potential breach of an individual's right to privacy