YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Should I give children and young people my personal email address or mobile phone number? No. You should not really need to email children or young people individually, but if you do, copy their parent/carer into the message – they will need to know what is happening and to give permission for activities in any case.

If you really do need to do this regularly, then ask the parish administrator to set up a personal parish email address for you, rather than using your own.

Remember that communications which might give the impression that you are developing a personal relationship with a child which goes beyond your relationship as a Children's Worker could be mis-interpreted, even if you think that you are just being friendly.

What should I do if a young person emails or rings me on my personal address/number? This is like meeting the child alone in a room with the door closed, and could be risky for both you and the young person. Ask them politely but firmly not to do this again and give them an alternative time to communicate face to face when there are other people present. If the young person repeats this action, do not respond to them, but do tell either their parent, or James, or Claire.

In the case of a phone call, you should let a parent/carer know what you have been talking about, but do let the child know that you are going to do this. In the case of an email, you should copy a parent/carer in to your response.

What should I do if a child or young person tells me that someone is bullying them through their mobile, tablet or other electronic communication? There is guidance in the parish safeguarding policy about how to deal with bullying and what to do if you think that the young person is at risk of harm. Cyber-bullying differs from bullying in person, in that it follows young people home. This can mean that young people feel that they have no safe place where they can escape. Electronic communication has great power to undermine confidence and isolate young people. It is no use telling a young person to just take no notice or to turn their phone off. Follow the guidance in the parish policy, and tell someone.

Should we let young people text or look at social media during youth group or Sunday School sessions? There may be occasions when you are using electronic communication as a teaching tool. Other than this, young people should not be doing this during sessions, as a simple matter of common courtesy. Encourage them to find the "off" button on their phone!

Can we share photographs of events? Parental permission is always needed if you are taking photos of children and young people, and it is good practice to obtain the permission of the young people involved too. There may be many reasons why young people or their parents would not want images made public. If you do share photos, it is preferable if these are group photos. In any case, do not use captions which could identify individual children or precise locations, if you use those regularly.

TO FACEBOOK OR NOT TO FACEBOOK?

Should we have a Facebook page for our youth organisations? No - this would exclude some of the members of our youth groups, as there is an age limit of 13 for Facebook users.

How can I let young people know about activities and events? Ask the parish administrator to set up a group parish email address for you. Copy parents/carers in – after all, you will need parental permission for many activities – tell the young people that this is the normal mode of communication in your group. It will save them having to remember to let their parents know, and is also environmentally friendly, saving paper.

If I use Facebook personally, can I have a young person from our youth group as a "friend" if they are over the age of 13? This is not advisable, even if you know them and their family well in a personal capacity. As a children's worker, you are always "on duty". If you feel you must do this (maybe you are related to the child) then keep a record of your communications and make sure that someone else can see what you do: the electronic equivalent of meeting in a public place. Never use Messenger, as this is always a one-to-one communication.

REMEMBER!

Keep talking to young people about how they use the internet and social media, and how they can do this safely. Even if you are feeling a bit at a loss with the technicalities, don't shy away: make it an open topic.

Promote this catchphrase for safe communication on-line:

"Zip it, Block it, Flag it"

Zip information (keep it private);
Block people who send offensive messages and don't open unknown links or attachments;
Flag anything they are unhappy about by telling an appropriate adult or mailing the church's secure email:
safemottram@gmail.com

Don't forget you can read the parish safeguarding policy and guidance on the parish website at
www.mottramparish.org.uk/safeguarding

More resources:
"Safeguarding in a Digital World – E-safety for churches and faith organisations", (CCPAS), available from Claire Bibby, and

http://www.tamesidesafeguardingchildren.org.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/esafety.aspx

James Halstead, Vicar
Pat Hall, Children's Work Co-ordinator
Claire Bibby, Safeguarding Co-ordinator

SAFE E-COMMUNICATION:
GUIDANCE FOR CHILDREN'S WORKERS IN MOTTRAM PARISH

"Help! I'm a dinosaur! I can't even use a mobile phone properly. How can I possibly help young people?"

Many children and young people use their mobiles and other devices as their primary means of communication. As Children's Workers in Mottram Parish we need to be aware of how children and young people communicate so that we can support and protect them. We may think that our technological skills are rudimentary compared with the children in our groups, but our life experience will attune us far better to what is safe and what is not, and the children in our care need that guidance.