

LIMITLESS

SAFEGUARDING ONLINE

In the light of the Covid-19 Pandemic, Limitless and the Elim Safeguarding Team want to resource you all to continue to reach, disciple and pastoral support the young people you have worked hard to engage with. It is an undoubtedly challenging time, in which it has become more important than ever that we stay present and in community online while we can't be face-to-face.

Safeguarding can be seen to limit online communication, but here is some advice on how to be online, engaging children and young people in the safest way possible. If you do not feel comfortable with online communication and social media, please contact us at the Limitless office and we'll be happy to advise as best we can.

Please also keep in mind that not all young people can be a part of online communication, it may require a regular phone call or other more creative means of staying in touch.

It is important that all groups adhere to the existing Elim safeguarding policy with the following additions and/or considerations: (https://www.elim.org.uk/Groups/139329/Elim_Safeguarding_Policy.aspx)

COMMUNICATE

Parents/guardians need to be informed of changes being made and have the reasons explained so that they can, in full understanding and knowledge, make the decision on how their children can participate. In times where a lot is uncertain, it is important that communication is clear. If you are a youth leader, do not rely on your young people to communicate things to their parents/guardians – it is your responsibility as their leader.

In terms of how these communications occur please, where possible, use church accounts where multiple people have access to see conversation threads, thereby providing accountability. Where this is not possible, keep records in the form of screenshots to pass on to your deputy or safeguarding lead if required. In group communication it is always advised that two leaders are involved, again providing accountability, even if one is acting as a 'silent-partner'.

Try to avoid any communications that may be misinterpreted and be wary of using emojis – many have double meanings. Also avoid using text shorthand such as xx; XOXO; LOL (laugh out loud or lots of love).

Be aware that many of the apps that young people are using have a minimum age of 13 (WhatsApp is actually 16) – consider this when thinking how best to communicate with your groups over the coming months. Please see below for the legal age limits on different social channels...

Platform	Minimum Age
Facebook	13
Instagram	13
TikTok	13
Twitter	13
Pintrest	13
YouTube	13
Google Meet	13
Skype	13
Zoom	16
Mircrosoft Teams	16
House Party	DO NOT USE
What's App	DO NOT USE
SnapChat	DO NOT USE

Please also consider who within your team, children and young people have the necessary technology and access to facilitate the greatest reach.

Finally, let your young people know who they can go to should they be concerned over anything on social media, such as the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP), Childline and NSPCC.

COMMUNICATION OVER MESSAGING APPS

Choose to communicate through apps that have an inbuilt memory and record threads of conversation – do NOT use Snapchat as this does not have this capability.

FILMING AND VIDEO MESSAGING

When filming and/or video messaging, please consider the following:

- Who it is you are filming – churches have a duty of care and so any child in foster care or subject to a protection plan, will need permission both from the carers and their social worker before submitting or posting videos.
- What it is you have in the background - avoid sharing any personal information and avoid filming things that would enable people to identify where you or a child are located.
- What and who can be seen and/or heard in the background.
- Refer to each other by first names only.

FURTHER INFORMATION ON CONSENT AND PARTICIPATION

Before posting you need to gain parental or guardian **written/online** consent to the use of the video. This consent needs to include their full name, the church they attend, contact email and phone number. If you are wanting non-leaders and their children to film, you also need to ensure those parents have given consent and have parental responsibility for the inclusion of the children they choose to involve.

To ensure that the consent has come from parents/guardians and not from a sneaky young person accessing parents emails, we ask that parents/guardians physically sign the form, take a photo and send it back by email. We have a template consent form available for you to edit according to your requirements.

Whatever platform you are choosing to use (YouTube, Zoom, GoogleHangouts, WhatsApp video etc), ensure that you have stated in **writing** and sent to parents/guardians exactly how the video may be distributed including the platform and intended audience.

Think about how children will be supervised and what the expectations are in terms of participation.

VIDEO CHATS (GOOGLE MEET (13+), SKYPE (13+), ZOOM (16+), MICROSOFT TEAMS (16+))

The following safeguarding considerations for the use of these technologies may be helpful, but, in essence, it is about getting permission and careful planning.

Please have two leaders, at a minimum, involved; initiate the call between leaders, accepting youth/others into the call after, ensure that the leaders are the last to exit the call. Do not record the meeting or take pictures of the virtual meeting unless you have prior consent to do so. It is not necessary for safeguarding purposes to record the conversation or meeting when you have two leaders present.

All of the video enabled apps mentioned above are private and require an invitation to join in, and are therefore considered safer compared to the likes of YouTube which is a public platform. However, please pay careful consideration to the age restrictions above to ensure you are using an age-appropriate platform.

The important thing for such platforms is to gain consent, you can invite non-church members providing you have consent from the parents or guardians first. You will need some form of written consent as explained above.

INSTAGRAM LIVE

If you're broadcasting live as leaders, that's absolutely fine. If you are wanting to connect and have young people join live on the broadcast please gain parental consent prior to giving them access to live video. You cannot stop people from watching live or commenting on videos but please be aware that the legal age for use of Instagram is 13.

YOUTUBE

If you create a page to upload videos, ensure that the information for consent states exactly how the video may be distributed including platform and the intended audience. This needs to be explicit both in information distributed prior to a video going up and within the description box of every video posted.

It is our recommendation that before a video is posted online, it is reviewed by 2 people to ensure they adhere to your usual safeguarding guidelines and the additions as specified in this document.

REPORTING CONCERNS

Please ensure that all workers have the contact details to enable communication with the safeguarding lead and deputy for your church, should they be needed.

Be clear with young people that if you see anything that concerns you, you will forward it to your church safeguarding lead.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

These are difficult times and there is an increasing number of people with diagnosed mental health issues. With this in mind, model healthy social media use – limit your hours of screen time and online communication, and consider not responding to messages beyond a particular time of night.

Think about posting some fun challenges and things that will encourage and benefit all. For example, we have created a video entitled *100 Things To Do At Home* to encourage young people to be creative with their time. This can be accessed via <http://www.youtube.com/limitlesselim>

A WORD FOR LEADERS

Remember that you're keeping doing what you've already been doing, but in a different way. You can still be you and keep doing big things for your children and young people in these days. It's okay to not have all the answers and not have everything prepared, but don't give up! Find a way to keep connected with your young people. God is still able to meet with our young people even when we can't, so give it your best and trust that God will do the rest.

Thank you for all you are doing to serve young people where you are. What you are doing is important. Together we can find a way.

