

1. Where does this policy apply?

- a. To all people working for the circuit, whether in volunteer or paid roles.
- b. To all electronic communication using computers including email, social media, website posts, and messaging with mobile phones and other mobile devices.
- c. For a calendar year following annual review.

2. What are the aims of this policy?

- a. To keep communication effective, safe and pleasant.

3. General communication

- a. All volunteers and staff are to read and agree to keep to the Social Media Guidelines* of The Methodist Church.
- b. If it's not kind, true and necessary don't write it.
- c. Try where possible to have face to face or at least telephone conversations and then summarise in email to confirm decisions.
- d. Use 'bcc' (blind copy) in preference to 'cc' when sending to a lot of people.
- e. Avoid writing in capitals BECAUSE IT LOOKS LIKE SHOUTING and may not be received in the tone intended.
- f. To reduce the amount of unnecessary emails avoid using 'reply all' where possible.
- g. Be careful about forwarding emails in case they contain sensitive information.
- h. Be aware of how emotional and physical state might have an adverse effect when composing a difficult email.

4. Communications with young people and children

- a. It is not appropriate to have private, non-work related contact with children & young people with whom you work using electronic communication. Inappropriate contact includes: sharing personal issues, anything that might burden a child or young person and excessive contact.
- b. It is recognised that there will be times when it is necessary to have private electronic communication : for example, sometimes it is easier for a child or young person to express a concern, thought or question using a text message or email rather than in person. Other reasons could include responding to a question or comment from a child or young person, contacting them to reassure them of support or confirming arrangements for a meeting or activity. In such cases the senior named youth leader should be informed of the communication.
- c. Volunteers and staff should make group leaders aware when they are in electronic communication with a child or young person. They should not initiate or respond to contact with a child or young person between 9pm and 8am unless the child or young person is at risk and there is no alternative means of communication. One exception to these times would be for youth events which finish in the evening or require overnight accommodation.
- d. Volunteers and Staff should take great care not to use language that might give the wrong impression or create misunderstanding when communicating with a child or young person, especially when using the informal language and shorthand often used in texts.
- e. Agreed email accounts, mobile numbers or social media groups, set up specifically for the purpose should be used exclusively for communication. Personal email addresses and mobile phone numbers should not be given to children and young people except where explicitly agreed with group leaders and parents or guardians for emergencies. Personal social networking accounts must be kept separate from any youth or children's work wherever possible and content kept appropriate.

*<http://www.methodist.org.uk/ministers-and-office-holders/technology-and-church/social-media-guidelines>