

ONLINE MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE

Section A

Factors to think about before considering offering online ministry with Children/Young People

Parishes may want to consider engaging with children/young people using virtual platforms. Keeping everyone safe from a safeguarding perspective whilst using these platforms is essential. It is important to understand how to implement some simple steps that can contribute towards keeping children/young people safe online. The message should be clear and concise: ‘think real world, think virtual world’.

We must apply the same rigorous levels of safeguarding to online as we do in person and there are some additional safeguarding measures that must be put in place to minimise specific online risk.

- **Deciding if ministry with children/young people online** is in fact the best way forward or could this activity be better delivered by parents/carers with support materials to share: ‘think will this ministry online meet children/young people’s needs and provide real opportunities for them?’.
- **Working safely in the online world** demands the same level of diligence and preparation as working face to face (e.g. undertaking a risk assessment, preparing codes of conduct, gaining consent etc.). Guidance on these already exist in the Parish Resource Pack to access please click [PARISH-RESOURCE-PACK-MAR 2020](#).
- **Is everyone involved aware of the potential risks of working online** and have they discussed the procedures that should be in place to mitigate against these risks: “think danger, think solutions?”
- **Any Parish Group which wishes to engage in online ministry** with young people should formally discuss this option with the Chair of the Parish Safeguarding Committee.

A Preapproval checklist that the Parish Group Leader in conjunction with the PSC Chair should consider as a method of systematically ensuring that they have covered all the necessary steps before planning online ministry with children/young people.

Only on completion of the above template, if it is decided that online ministry with children/young people is appropriate to take place, should section B then be considered.

Section B

Top Tips for Keeping Everyone Safe Online

Here is some advice and best practice on working safely with children/young people online. This should be read in conjunction with the Diocesan Guidance on the Use of Technology which can be accessed using the following link: [-PARISH-RESOURCE-PACK-MAR 2020.pdf](#)

- **RISK ASSESS:** Before an activity takes place, an appropriate risk assessment should be undertaken prior to engaging in any activity online. The online world is not an easier option and should not be regarded as such. Preparation for the success of an online session is crucial. The risk assessment should follow the Diocesan policy and procedures in relation to Safeguarding and data protection. (Resource Pack Diocesan Safeguarding Data Protection/Privacy Guidelines [PARISH-RESOURCE-PACK-MAR 2020.pdf](#) page 121 Down and Connor Privacy Notice [Privacy-Notice-DC-31-May-18-2.pdf](#))
- **RECRUITMENT/VETTING:** ‘Normal’ volunteer rules apply whilst working online, such as recruitment and safeguarding processes – i.e. you need at least two safely recruited volunteers present who would normally have ‘real time’ contact with this group. Make sure both leaders are present online before children/young people arrive. Ideally use the same time slot if an existing group meeting.

NO RECORDING: Always make a note/record of the activity, including the date, timing and who participated, including those that arrived/departed early or late, but **DO NOT RECORD** the sessions. Most video conferencing software allows for the session to be recorded. Online sessions should never be recorded, as this could be a breach of data protection so avoid doing this, as you would need separate permission for data capture and there are all sorts of issues around storage, GDPR etc.

- You must have **approval** from the Parish Safeguarding Committee/Parish Priest. Approval must be made in writing such as being documented in the minutes of the meeting.
- **Consent from children/young people and parents/carers are prerequisites** before any online activity takes place. If you do not get consent the child/young person will not be able to join the call. In preparation for the activity, set up an email which explains what you are doing, the date and time of the online activity, which leaders are participating and provide some information as to what you will be doing, you need to explain what the consent is for. Send out a consent form (please see sample copy attached) for completion by the child/young person and parent/carers which they can return using the email address provided. Use a generic parish email address rather than personal email addresses. The proposed contract of work needs to be forwarded to parents/carers. For those who are over 16, what you do in the real world should apply, such as if you contact the young person directly and copied to parents/carers.
- **Use parents/carer's email addresses** to send the meeting invite to, unless the young person is over 16 when you send to the young person directly and copy the parent/carer into the communication, as this ensures parents/carers are aware that it is happening and can set up the child/young person to access the session appropriately with any oversight if they want.
- **If new members want to join the group, they should have 'normal' group consent forms filled in as well** – you will want them to come to the real group anyway when it re-forms. Whatever steps you undertake in the 'real world' to verify the identity of participants needs to be applied in the online world. This

needs to be explained to the participant. If you are recruiting new leaders for this group, the safe recruitment process must be followed before they can participate.

- **CODES OF BEHAVIOUR** – appropriate behaviour for leaders in real time equally apply to online work with children/young people and should be in place and followed as you would expect in face to face activities e.g. appropriate use of language, behaviour, appropriate boundaries etc. It might be worth a discussion with the leaders around this before the meeting happens. It might also be helpful to consult your existing codes of behaviour and check appropriateness for use online.
- **CONTRACT/RULES:** A contract of work/code/rules of behaviour needs to be discussed and agreed by participants, e.g., how participants are expected to behave, no recording of sessions, what the session will involve, no bullying during or after the activity, how people should respond, how to challenge aspects of the work if necessary, the use of mobile phones during the session, what to do if someone needs to be removed from the activity and future contact following the session. The rules governing each session should be discussed and agreed with the participants at the first session.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

- Avoid the use of personal IT equipment.
- **Supervision ratios of adult to child/young person** – these are the same regardless of the mechanism used, i.e. direct or online. For any online activity with children/young people at least two safely recruited volunteers need to be present.
- **Age**
 - It is important to consider the age of your children/young people, both in terms of the age requirements of the service you are using, together with their ability to participate.

- Different platforms have different restrictions in relation to age so ensure you take account of age restrictions within the terms and conditions of use of your chosen platform.
- For children under 13 it is best practice for a parent/carer to be in the room when they are taking part in an online activity.
- **Avoid the use of Skype/Facetime** – these are social media platforms and as such share contact details with all users. You may therefore inadvertently connect children/young people up with other people as an unintended consequence. There are a range of video conferencing platforms (such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams). When using these platforms, ensure you use the most up-to-date guidance for security – see links below.
- **Size** - larger groups of children/young people may be more challenging to manage during an interactive online activity and so more presentational/educational approaches may be more suitable.
- **Location/Environment** - for live video and audio being used, there should be careful consideration of the location that everyone uses. Children/young people should be in more public places i.e. it is not appropriate for bedrooms/bathrooms to be used. Leaders should ensure that the background being used by them is appropriate and that there is an appropriate dress code.
- **Be careful** that children/young people do not incur surprising costs, e.g. mobile data access charges - (video uses significant amounts of data).
- **For Online Platforms**, which allow for password access, only use password/passcode-protected meetings, create a new password for every meeting, and send details securely to participants (do not, for example, share details on social media). Passwords should only be sent to parents/carers of children/young people and not directly to the child/young person unless over 16. Joining details should only be shared with participants.
- The online activity should not take place after 9:00pm.

- **Be inclusive** – are there children/young people who would benefit from being involved in the activity unable to do so due to adversity for example poverty, disability, ethnicity. If so, consider how these could be addressed to assist their involvement. Are there any children/young people from your group who would struggle to participate in the online activity and what extra support(s) can be put in place for them? If you have any child/young person involved who are not comfortable with technology try to help them get setup beforehand, by phoning them on a phone number supplied by a parent/carer and talking them through the steps. This will help make sure no-one is excluded.
- **Screen shots of the virtual activity** should not be taken without the expressed consent of parents/carer and child/young person. Written specific permission must be sought from children, young people, and their parents/carers if photographs are to be published in any forum i.e. print or online.
- **Avoid the use of IT language** such as Emojis as they can often be misinterpreted.
- If **videos** are being used in the activity, be careful to check the content beforehand.
- Consider what **other devices are open** during the ministry online by all participants and ensure these do not present a risk, e.g. Googlehome, Alexa.

Before the Activity Takes Place

- **Do not advertise the meeting ID and password** on publicly accessible forums. Instead, try to send direct email invites using parent/carer emails.
- **Be aware of and sensitive to, technical difficulties!** There can be issues with speakers and microphones. The chances are children and young people will be familiar with the technology and have no difficulties, leaders may have issues. Use the software with leaders first to try and sort out any issues and become familiar with the tool you are going to use.

- **Do a trial run** with a few people before the activity, so you can make this tool easy to use for everyone.
- **Send instructions** and any user guides (links above) to parents/carers.
- **It may be useful** to have a session with parent/carers first, to explain and answer questions and agree how online ministry will work.

During the Activity

- **Welcome your group** as people log in. It may take a little while for everybody to get online, so do not start until you think everyone is on.
- **Have a welcome message** at the front and any disclaimers e.g. 'Meeting in progress'.
- **Lock the meeting** once all are joined.
- If available **disable private screen sharing**.
- **If available disable options for private chat** between participants. If participants need to contact leaders, for example, if they are worried or have a concern, explain that they can do so using the email address used for the online activity.
- **Remember** to pause, give people time to speak, people are a little slower to respond online than they are face-to-face. It may be helpful to ask individuals their thoughts on a question so other people know somebody is going to speak.
- **Know** what options you have available to control the meeting. For example:

- **the Waiting Room feature** which allows the organiser to put participants into a 'Waiting Room'. This allows you to control when people join your meeting.
 - **Putting someone on hold.** If this happens to someone it is important that you contact them and explain the reason why. You should give them a time frame for when they will be added back into the group and discuss the guidelines/rules for engaging in the activity.
 - **Disable someone's video.** Organisers can turn someone's video off. This will allow hosts to block unwanted, distracting, or inappropriate gestures on video. Please write this up as an incident report.
 - **Mute participants.** Hosts can mute/unmute individual participants or all of them at once. Hosts can block unwanted, distracting, or inappropriate noise from other participants.
 - **Remove someone from the activity.** If someone is removed it is important that you contact them after you have removed them and explain the reason why they have been removed. Once someone is removed, they cannot re-join. Please write this up as an incident report.
- **If someone external to the group**, joins the activity, leaders should pause the session and address the issue.
 - **If anything of a safeguarding nature arises during the session, appropriate reporting procedures should apply.**
 - **As you end**, make sure everyone knows that you are ending your time together, let them know to leave the online platform and then stop the meeting. Both leaders should remain online until all children/young people have logged off. Ensure that the platform used has been closed down.

After the Activity

- **Thank** everyone for joining with you.
- **Encourage** everyone to contact the activity leaders if needed via the agreed email address.
- **Make sure** everyone knows how you will be meeting again and where to find instructions for the next activity session.
- **Always** make a note/record of the activity, including the date, timing and who participated, including those that arrived/departed early or late.
- Delete the account details for the specific platform used for the activity.

If you have any further questions please contact the Safeguarding Office office@soddc.org Telephone number: 028 9049 2798.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Further information on best practice on virtual engagement with children/young people, as well as resources for internet safety can be accessed through:

[SBNI E-Safety Guidance for Faith-Based Groups](#)

[CEOP](#): The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) has numerous resources for parents and carers and children and young people using the internet; there are several video tutorials on the THINKUKNOW site <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk> which is part of CEOP.

[NSPCC](#): has useful resources for keeping children and young people safe online including sections on Cyberbullying and Sexting. Reporting and Monitoring.

[Parents Protect](#): is a site to help parents, carers and other protective adults with information and advice to help them prevent child sexual abuse.

[UK Safer Internet Helpline](#) is a source of support.

Useful information about privacy settings for online platforms

[Zoom](#)

[Microsoft Teams](#)

Other Helpful Resources

<http://esafety.ie/>

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/news/2020/may/online-safety-during-coronavirus>

<https://inege.com/blog/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OEbIF28GGFA&feature=youtu.be>

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/>

JOINT CHILD/YOUNG PERSON, PARENTAL/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

JOINT CHILD/YOUNG PERSON and PARENTAL/CARER CONSENT FORM – Online activity with children/young people

This section should be completed by the Activity Leader

Event: Name of event using an online platform with children/young people in place of face to face direct activities

Dates: State start and end times and days

The online platform that we will be using is (name of platform)

Names of Leader(s) in charge: At least two leaders should be present for each online activity: 1)

2)

Details of Child/Young Person

NAME.....

NAME THEY ARE USUALLY KNOWN BY:

ADDRESS.....

POSTCODE

AGE.....

DATE OF BIRTH.....

Child/Young Person Consent Section

I (insert full name) would like to take part in the above-mentioned activity.

Parental/Carer Consent and Authorisation

I give consent for the child/young person named to participate in the above-mentioned activity at the times and dates stipulated. I acknowledge the need for acceptable responsible behaviour on their part.

SIGNATURE

DATE

NAME.....

PARENT'S/CARER'S
EMAIL.....

Please return this consent form to

Leader's contact details

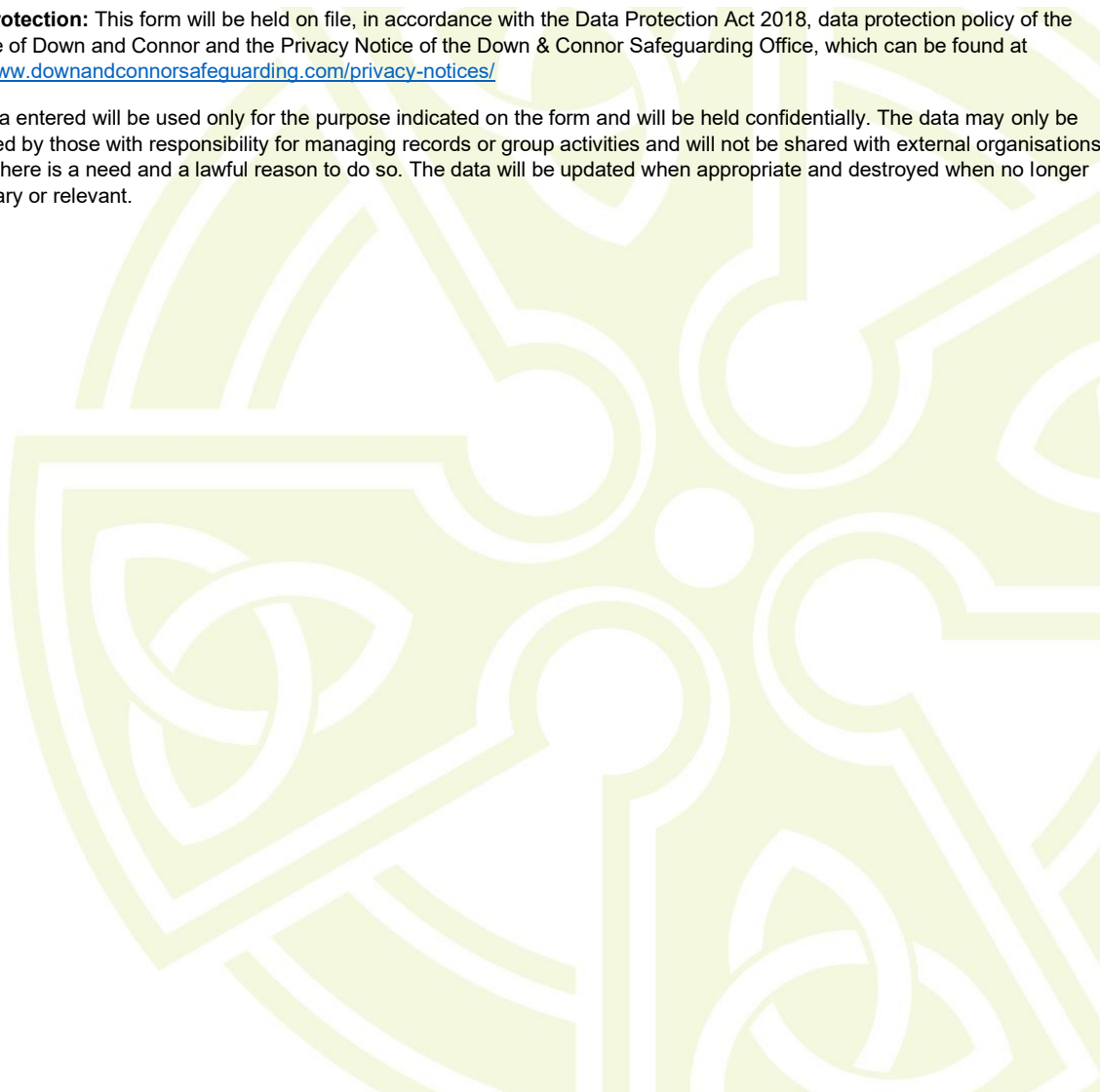
EMAIL ADDRESS:

CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBER:

POSTAL ADDRESS:

Data Protection: This form will be held on file, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, data protection policy of the Diocese of Down and Connor and the Privacy Notice of the Down & Connor Safeguarding Office, which can be found at <http://www.downandconnorsafeguarding.com/privacy-notices/>

The data entered will be used only for the purpose indicated on the form and will be held confidentially. The data may only be accessed by those with responsibility for managing records or group activities and will not be shared with external organisations unless there is a need and a lawful reason to do so. The data will be updated when appropriate and destroyed when no longer necessary or relevant.



ONLINE MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE APPROVAL FORM

PARISH DETAILS

NAME OF PARISH:	
NAME OF PSC CHAIRPERSON:	
HAVE THE PARISH PRIEST AND PARISH SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE BEEN INFORMED OF THIS EVENT?	

LEADERS CONTACT DETAILS

NAME:	
CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBER:	
EMAIL ADDRESS:	

NAME OF MONITOR DURING EVENT: _____

PARISH VOLUNTEER LEADERS DETAILS

NAME	VETTED (yes/no)	CHLLD LEVEL 1 SAFEGUARDING TRAINING COMPLETED (Yes/No)	CHILD LEVEL 2 SAFEGUARDING TRAINING COMPLETED (Yes/No)	HAVE ATTENDED BEST PRACTICE IN ONLINE MINISTRY TRAINING

ONLINE MINISTRY DETAILS

WHAT TYPE OF ONLINE MINISTRY HAVE YOU PLANNED?
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WHAT IS YOUR RATIONALE FOR ONLINE MINISTRY?			
WHICH VIRTUAL PLATFORM WILL BE USED? (Please tick/ circle)	ZOOM <input type="checkbox"/>	MICROSOFT TEAMS <input type="checkbox"/>	OTHER <input type="checkbox"/>
IF YOU HAVE TICKED OTHER, PLEASE SPECIFY:			

TASKS TO BE COMPLETED

TASK	YES/NO
Has a risk assessment been completed and attached?	
Has consultation been conducted with the proposed participants and their parent on their views on this ministry?	
Is the child consent form prepared and ready to be issued?	
Have you a Code of Behaviour?	
Have you the correct Adult/Child/Young people ratios to run this event?	
Have you a written plan for the session – Including timings, alternative facilitations skills, resources etc.	

AUTHORISED

NAME OF EVENT:
LEADER OF EVENT:
PARISH SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON:
PARISH PRIEST:
DATE: