

Guidance on Use of Technology



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Church Authorities need to assess the benefits of technology and how this can be used safely and effectively, in line with rules that respect the dignity and rights of all users, particularly children and young people.

Detailed policies and procedures should be provided on the use of technology, including digital and online systems such as:

- Conducting Ministry with children using digital media.
- Photography.
- Use of Internet, texting and emailing.
- Webcams and CCTV.

The majority of occasions when people use mobile phones, computers or take photographs of children and young people do not provide any cause for concern. However, there are occasions when this is not the case.

At the outset it is important to identify the risks associated with the use of technology, and then to minimise the risks by putting in place measures outlined below. [The SBNI Online Safety Hub](#) may assist with this.

Consent

The consent of parents, carers, children and young people should always be sought prior to engaging in any activity that involves the use of IT equipment, such as those outlined above.

A parish or Diocesan group may seek overall [Consent \(LinkTBC\)](#) from its members/group leaders or it may ask for permission for set occasions.

When seeking consent for the use of images or videos for Church purposes such as First Communion

or Confirmation, the following should be considered:

- The issue of consent for photography/videoing for Church purposes should be addressed with parents, carers, children and young people prior to the sacramental day, and the policy should be explained to all families who will be attending.
- In seeking consent for photography/videos, children, young people and families should be reminded about the rights to privacy and data protection of other children, young people their families and the wider community.
- Those organising an event for Church purposes, and who are seeking consent for photography/video usage, should be sensitive to the fact that many parents/carers are reluctant to allow the general viewing of their children and young people or of children in their care, on sites such as YouTube, Facebook, etc.
- Close liaison on the issue of consent should be maintained with relevant authorities to agree mechanisms for securing consent, some schools establish consent at the year start.

Purpose

Guidelines should be clear as to the reason and purpose of the use of the particular form of technology:

- Provide a clear brief about what is considered appropriate in terms of content and behaviour and use of equipment.
- Provide guidance on acceptable language.
- Provide guidance on storage of information.
- Provide guidance on use of photography: if using an external photographer/videographer, seek confirmation about any publications that will be made by them after the event, and ensure that they have been vetted (if appropriate), have

identification and do not have any unsupervised access to the children and young people or one-to-one photo sessions with them at the event.

- Images of children and young people should never be taken that capture them in what are commonly understood as 'non-public' activities. Children and young people should be fully and appropriately dressed and related images should always be about the activity and not focused on any individual child and young person.
- Images should not allow the identification of a child and young person or their whereabouts. The full name of a child or young person should not be used.
- Children and young people in vulnerable circumstances (e.g. those in care or victims of any type of abuse) should not be photographed without the consent of those who hold parental responsibility.
- Provide guidance on the use of mobile phones, and especially on the use of mobile phone cameras, which can be easily used for offensive actions without the subject being aware of their use.
- Ensure all relevant guidance and information is communicated with parents/carers, children and young people.

Relevant Forms

SO14

USEFUL RESOURCES

- **SBNI Online Safety Hub**
- **Consent for an activity or event**