

September 2023

POLICY FOR THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA, EMAIL AND MOBILE PHONES

PARISH OF HERTFORD ST ANDREW

(Please also see our Guidelines and Risk Assessment for Video Conferencing 2022)

This Policy was adopted at a
Parochial Church Council meeting held on September 11th 2023

Rev. Alan Stewart

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The Role of the PCC

The PCC must approve the use of social media and mobile phones by the church. Where there are Facebook and other social media groups set up on the church's behalf, the PCC must ensure there is a **named person** to whom all workers are accountable. Church approved social media groups shall only be used to promote and support church activities and events.

The named person must be a church officer and should be aware of the account name and password so that they can at any time log on to the account to monitor the communications. The named person should be proactive in fulfilling this role. Social Media accounts managed by church officers are listed in the following table:

Social Media Account	Named person
Church Facebook page	Philippa Probert – Church Administrator
WhatsApp group – Junior Church	Claire Wachter – Junior Church Leader
WhatsApp group – TMM	John Wachter – TMM Leader
WhatsApp group & Instagram messaging - Shake	Bryan Fries – Young Life
WhatsApp group – Parish Visiting	Catherine Sleath – Parish Safeguarding Officer
WhatsApp group – St Andrew's NEWS	Catherine Sleath – Parish Safeguarding Officer
WhatsApp group – St Andrew's SOCIAL	Catherine Sleath – Parish Safeguarding Officer

Church officers remain bound by professional rules of confidentiality. Where there is concern that a young person or adult is at risk of abuse, or they themselves pose a risk of abuse to others, safeguarding procedures must always be followed.

Procedures when communicating with young people

Young people communicate primarily through social media, email and mobile phone and it is essential for our ministry that we engage with them effectively and safely. Social media is continually changing and these guidelines will be reviewed and updated annually.

'Young people' are defined as those in school years 7 to 13 or equivalent. Where a young person reaches the age of 18 before leaving our youth work provision it is good practice to adhere to this policy. Children in year 6 and below should not normally be communicated with using social media or mobile phones.

For all forms of communication

Communication should not usually take place with young people before 7.30 am after 9.30pm or on staff members' days off. Note this doesn't mean staff and volunteers have to be available to young people at all other times.

Young people should be advised that, whilst staff and volunteers will exercise appropriate discretion in dealing with the substance of communication, they cannot promise confidentiality.

Social Media

Schools and secular youth work policies recommend that an adult should not be friends with or connect with an under 18 on social media. St Andrew's accepts this recommendation. Private messaging is not permitted

Shake

Shake leaders communicate with parents and the young people (provided parents have given their written consent) via WhatsApp and Instagram.

- Once permission is given, staff and some volunteers (small group leaders, mentors and group leaders) may hold mobile phone numbers of the young people in their groups.
- Text communication should be short and usually be a one off communication to arrange a meeting or remind young people to attend an event.
- Staff and volunteers should use an appropriate tone; friendly but not over-familiar or personal. While communications should be warm and friendly, they should not suggest or offer a special relationship.
- Staff and volunteers should only give personal contact details that are within the public domain of St Andrew's, including their mobile phone number.
- Conversations should not be had over texts. Staff and volunteers should arrange to meet in person, although never alone, with a young person if the young person would like to talk.
- Staff and volunteers may have phone calls with young people, but these should be short.
- If a disclosure is made that raises a safeguarding concern, verbatim notes should be made as soon as possible. This information should be reported to the line manager and Parish Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible and the records kept on file for a term in accordance with the Hertford St Andrew's guidance on record keeping in parishes.
- When a member of staff or volunteer leaves the youth work team, young people's numbers should be removed from private phones and any digital or written record should be returned to St Andrew's for secure storage.

TMM and Junior Church

Leaders communicate with parents only via WhatsApp groups. Children and young people are not members of these groups.