THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Safeguarding: Safely Encouraging Young People to Create Content for your Church

This guidance helps you involve children and young people in digital content in ways that are safe, consent-based and respectful, and signposts resources for church leaders, parents/carers and young people. Children and young people may help to create content, but adults own the accounts, upload the content and monitor any engagement.

This document sets out a simple sequence for safely involving children and young people in creating digital content for your church. It can be used as a planning tool and as a checklist before content is shared.

Step 1: Be clear about purpose and platform

- Agree where the content may be used (church building, printed materials, website, social media, livestream).
- We have checked basic legal and safeguarding guidance, including platform age limits, church social media policy, and relevant Church of England/diocesan safeguarding guidance.
- We will not ask or encourage a child or young person to sign up to, or log into, a platform they are under the minimum age to use.

Step 2: Plan leadership, risk assessment and oversight

- Those leading the project are appropriately recruited, trained and, where required, DBS-checked.
- A written risk assessment has been completed or updated, covering both in-person and online risks.
- Consider any specific risks for this child or young person (for example, care status, known risks, domestic abuse or targeted harassment).
- We are satisfied that identified risks can be managed to an acceptable level.

Step 3: Involve young people and check comfort

- Explain the idea and why children and young people's voices and creativity are valued.

- Young people have been offered different ways to be involved (on camera, behind camera, planning, editing, artwork, etc.).
- The group has agreed simple ground rules (for example, no pressure to appear on camera; no content that embarrasses or shames someone; anyone can change their mind).
- Leaders have checked individually with less confident children and young people that they feel able to say no or step back.

Step 4: Consent and safeguarding checks

- We are using an up-to-date photography/media consent form that covers images, video, audio and online use where relevant.
- Consent forms clearly explain what is being created, where it may be used, how long for, and how someone can ask for removal.
- We have followed our usual pattern for consent for under-18s (for example, parent/carer consent plus child/young person agreement, according to age).
- We have considered whether featuring this child or young person online could increase their risk (for example, where there are concerns about domestic abuse, stalking or targeted harassment) and adapted the plan if needed.
- Any child or young person for whom consent is not given, unclear or withdrawn is not featured in the content.

Step 5: Create the content safely

- Where possible, church-owned devices are used and material is stored securely.
- Appropriate adult-to-child ratios are maintained throughout filming/creation.
- Spaces used for creating content are safe, appropriate and in line with safer working practice.
- We avoid capturing identifiable home addresses, full school details, including uniform logos, geotag/location data or other information that may put someone at risk.
- Leaders remind young people not to include personal or confidential information about other children, young people or adults.

- Leaders pay attention to body language and emotions, pausing to check in if anyone appears uncomfortable.

Step 6: Approval route before sharing

- An approval route has been clearly agreed (names/roles are recorded).
- Before approving, the approvers have checked that the content matches the agreed purpose.
- The content respects the ground rules agreed with the group and treats all participants with dignity.
- Consent clearly covers the planned use of the content.
- Approvers have considered whether any safeguarding concerns are visible or described in the content, including information about other children, young people or adults.

Step 7: Share, monitor and respond

- Content is shared from an official church account, not from personal accounts.
- Church social media and messaging accounts are owned and administered by appropriate adult church officers.
- Children and young people are not account owners, administrators or moderators for church social media or messaging accounts.
- Someone is responsible for monitoring comments and messages for a set period after posting.
- We understand that repeated or targeted negative comments about a child or young person may be a safeguarding concern as well as a moderation issue.
- We apply our church's moderation and social media guidelines if comments become abusive, harmful or unsafe.
- Any safeguarding concerns raised in comments or direct messages are passed to the PSO/DSA without delay.

Step 8: Review and removal process

- After the project, children and young people are invited to reflect on what went well and what could be improved.
- The church has a visible, simple process for people to request removal of photos or videos (for example, a statement and contact on the website).
- Any safeguarding-relevant issues arising from the project have been recorded in line with safeguarding records guidance.

Example website wording for removal requests:
"If you appear in a photo or video shared by this church and would like it to be removed, please contact [role/email]. We will always take requests seriously and remove or edit content wherever reasonably possible."

Further information & up-to-date guidance

Church of England resources:

- Digital Charter
- Advice for using social media to reach young people
- Children and young people safeguarding resources : Safeguarding resources designed directly with and for children and young people
- Advice on what to include in a church social media policy : Purpose, values, safety, consent and who does what.

External Resources:

- NSPCC : Online safety (for organisations)
- NSPCC : Social media, online communities and safeguarding
- UK Safer Internet Centre : - A partnership providing tips, advice, helplines and resources to help children and young people stay safe online, including training and tools for professionals.
- CEOP Education (NCA) : The National Crime Agency's education programme on protecting children and young people from online child sexual abuse and exploitation, including materials for professionals.