

Video Conferencing with Young People



In these extraordinary times, you may want to consider virtual meetups with your youth group (secondary school age – 11+). Here is some advice on how to do this safely. Please adhere to the following points:

- Avoid the use of Skype / Facetime – these are social media tools and as such share contact details with all users, you may inadvertently connect young people up with other people as an unintended consequence.
 - Instead use a video conferencing platform such as Zoom: <https://zoom.us/> This is free to use (will give you a 40 min chat) or a paid for account allows you to host longer sessions. Users only need to have an email address for account setup.
 - Use of this is beyond the normal running of your group and therefore needs explicit permission before use in the following ways:
 - **You must have the Elders Meeting approval** – speak to your Children’s and Youth Elder or Church Secretary to discuss and minute that this is happening – why not trial a video conference with some of these people first?! This does not need to be a complicated process.
 - **You need parental consent** – set up an email which explains what you are doing, the date and time of the video conference session, which youth leaders are participating and what you roughly will be doing. Ask for a reply as a form of consent and keep these emails in a separate folder.
- aged 13 upwards can provide their own consent, must have consent for under 13s (unless providing preventative or counselling service)**
- **Use parents/carers email address** to send the meeting invite to, especially as young people never check their emails(!) and this ensures parents/carers are aware that it is happening and can set up the young people to access the session appropriately with any oversight if they want.
 - ‘Normal’ youth group rules would apply including with regards to recruitment and safeguarding process – i.e. you need at least 2 safely recruited youth leaders present who would normally have ‘real time’ contact with this group. Make sure both leaders are live before young people arrive. Ideally use the same time slot as your normal youth group meeting. If new youth 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. If you are recruiting new leaders for this group, then a safer recruitment process must be followed before they can participate (please see <https://urc.org.uk/good-practice-policy-and-procedures>).
 - Codes of conduct – appropriate behaviour for leaders and young people should be followed as you would expect in the usual youth group setting. You can take advice on expected code of conduct from Good Practice 5 - Appendix A3.

- As always, be inclusive – are there any young people from your group who would struggle to participate in this way, what extra support can be put in place for them?
- As well as the video interface, there is usually space to write comments and participants can screen share too – consider use of this facility for example to write one-word answers to questions to share, be creative!
- Be aware of and sensitive to technical difficulties! There can be issues with speakers and microphones! Chances are young people will have this sussed but leaders may have issues.... !! Use the software with leaders first to try and sort out any difficulties.
- DO NOT RECORD. Most video conferencing software allows for the session to be recorded – this is an option for the host of the meeting only. Avoid doing this, as you would need separate permission for data capture and there are all sorts of issues around storage, GDPR etc.
- You should avoid listing zoom links (Personal Meeting IDs) in public, and never allow screen sharing as a standard default for all users (to prevent ‘room-bombing’)
- Familiarise yourself with the ways in which you’re able to manage participants as host (including muting individuals and locking the meeting), and make use of the ‘Waiting Room’ feature.
- You might also want to consider password-protecting any Zoom meetings which aren’t open to the public as a standard good practice measure.
- Be ready and brief other workers and leaders who support the online engagement with children and young people on how to report any disclosures of abuse or other safeguarding concerns with the designated persons (local church safeguarding coordinator or synod safeguarding officers).

*“Let us think of ways to motivate one another
to acts of love and good works.
And let us not neglect our meeting together,
as some people do,
but encourage one another,
especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.”
Hebrews 10:24-25*

See URC risk assessment tool and codes of conduct for online engagement with children and families here:

{LINK}

See information guides from the URC on using various online platforms here:

<https://urc.org.uk/information-guides>

<https://urc.org.uk/our-work/children-and-youth.html>

children.youth@urc.org.uk

A helpful guide to online youth work:

https://thirtyoneeight.org/media/2602/guidance-for-online-youth-work_v2.pdf

[Adapted from a resource by Simon Hill, Youth Officer, Diocese of Worcester]