**These guidelines have been sent by another Diocese. We have included some information from our own safeguarding team at the bottom of this document. Please ensure you read this and follow their instructions before you start.**

**Video Conferencing with Young People**

In these extraordinary times, you may want to consider virtual meetups with your youth group (secondary school age: 13+). 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 PCC approval** – speak to your vicar, churchwarden, standing committee or PCC group 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.
  + **Use parents/carers email address** to send the meeting invite to, especially as young people never check their emails(!). Zoom has a minimum age of 16+, so having the parents accept and set up the session ensures parents/carers are aware that it is happening and can oversee as they wish.
* ‘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.
* Codes of conduct – appropriate behaviour for leaders should be followed as you would expect in the usual youth group setting, it might be worth a discussion with your leaders around this before the meeting happens.
* 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.

**Important Zoom settings**

You may be aware in the news of Zoom meetings being hijacked by an anonymous person(s) and then being able to share inappropriate content to the audience. Here are some guidelines on what best practices to follow.

* Make meetings private. In Zoom, there are two options to make a meeting private: require a meeting password or use the waiting room feature and control the admittance of guests. We recommend both.
* Do not share a link to a meeting on an unrestricted publicly available social media post. Provide the link directly to specific people.
* Manage screensharing options. In Zoom, change screensharing to ‘Host Only’
* Ensure users are using the updated version (since January 2020). In Zoom’s security update, they added passwords by default for meetings and disabled the ability to randomly scan for meetings to join.
* DO NOT RECORD. Standard settings in Zoom are set to record part of the call. Go into your account in your web browser, choose ‘Settings’ and then ‘Recordings’ to turn them off. You need separate permission for recording around data capture and there are all sorts of issues around storage, GDPR etc.

**Safeguarding points:**

Most youth organisations have avoided the use of video conferencing – which means the guidance is lagging behind. This is perhaps because of the issue of practical access to devices and technology (who does it exclude), putting vulnerable people being on camera and the lack of control over who else ‘appears’ on anyone’s cameras. it blurs boundaries between home and church/club, the fact that it can unknowingly be recorded; if not via the platform then via another device viewing the call - and therefore the huge complexity of maintaining a safe environment.

Workers who do use video conferencing to connect with young people should do so with caution and not rush into it. Permissions need to be gained, training of staff/volunteers needs to be in place and codes of conduct clear.  As well as permissions and the guidance given here in any video conferencing only the workers/leaders should share their camera, control screen and any slides/film. Young people’s cameras should be disabled and they engage in the session through access to a live chat box and on screen polls and whiteboards, for example.

Consider appropriate apps for use with young people – for example, whatsapp is now 16+. There may be a lack of familiarity amongst young people and their parents with Zoom as a platform. Consider where this approach potentially leaves young people whose parents do not consent to them taking part in this way?

Please refer to the guidelines set out on pages 4-29 to 4-31 of A Safe Church.

How is your digital awareness? You can access some training here: [https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/professionals/training/kcso/](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/_c7DCD937cOyxOHWTspd?domain=thinkuknow.co.uk/) £35pp.