

Ashwood Church Social Media Policy

(Please also refer to Mobile Phone Policy and Safeguarding Policy)

As a church, we are more and more aware how technology is playing a big part in the everyday things that we are involved in. This obviously plays an important role in the way we communicate with people and it is important what we are able to use social media to communicate with those we are working with. We acknowledge the use of these technologies as a legitimate means of communicating with children and young people but also set out here expectations of the church in relation to their use.

What is Social Networking?

Social networking websites function like an online community of internet users. Depending on the website in question, many of these online community members share common interests in hobbies, religion, or politics. Once you are granted access to a social networking website you can begin to socialise. This socialisation may include reading the profile pages of other members and possibly even contacting them.

The friends that you can make are just one of the many benefits to social networking online. Another one of those benefits includes diversity because the internet gives individuals from all around the world access to social networking sites

Examples of social networking sites include Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Snapchat and Instagram.

Young people and the people we work with can be at risk from online predators through these media, and also can be subject to bullying or peer pressure from their peers via social media. It is important you understand the social media used by young people so you are aware of the dangers young people face and can respond to this appropriately.

Appropriate use of Social Media for Ashwood Staff and Volunteers:

You are of course entitled to have your own social media sites. However please consider your privacy settings, and think carefully before accepting friend requests from young people and service users. You may wish to consider the following questions:

Am I comfortable with this person seeing my social media site?

Would the parent/carer consider it appropriate?

Do I know the family of the child/young person?

Is it necessary to the development of an appropriate relationship with this person?

Are they likely to misinterpret communication?

What are the benefits to them?

Am I being fair and demonstrating equality? (i.e. it would not be appropriate to respond to requests from some members of a group but not others)

If I have got this persons contact details thurgh my position in Ashwood Church, do I have written permission to use their contact details for this form of communication, in line with GDPR requirements?

Are they of the appropriate age to be accessing this social media (e.g. young people under 13 should not be using Facebook so to accept their request would be condoning this, and young people under 16 should not be using whatsapp.)

If you are unsure about whether accepting a request is appropriate please ask your line manager or the group leader.

Also bear in mind that some media (e.g. Twitter) are public and anyone can see your page without you giving permission.

Please also follow these guidelines:

- Always use a public group to communicate where possible (e.g. The Ashwood Church Youth Facebook page)
- The material you put on social media should reflect your beliefs and values and not undermine those of the church.
- You should not post any content on your profiles which it would be professionally inappropriate for young people to know or see or you should use the privacy settings of a site to ensure this content is not accessible to young people
- You should lead by example, and ensure you are engaging with social media safely and appropriately.
- No photos of young people are to be posted on personal social media pages.
- No invitations to become a 'friend' should to be sent to young people through your personal page – if you are happy to be friends with young people over the age of 16 and it is appropriate you should wait for their request
- Avoid any private chats or messages from young people - make sure your conversations are kept public, and can be seen by other appropriate adults.
- Always manage your privacy settings to avoid people from trying to log in to your social media pages.
- Avoid Relay Chat (IRC) e.g. MSN Messenger, AOL AIM, Yahoo Messenger, Facebook messenger, SnapChat.
- Ensure that this mode of social media is not going to result in someone's personal details with others, without their permission (e.g. On whatsapp, everyone in the group can see each other's telephone number)