



Youth-Work Policy Document for the Tenpenny Benefice (during and post-pandemic)

February 2021

Life has changed drastically since the outbreak of COVID-19, and this has of course had an impact on our youth ministry and outreach. I have been researching (references at the bottom of this document) and reviewing our current policies, seeking advice from other professionals and working on creating a youth work policy that is applicable to our online work. Much of this document is modelled on a combination of advice, guidance and templates from the resources in the source list (page 8). Work with schools (for example, Chaplaincy at The Colne, Brightlingsea) is managed separately, as that works within what the school are happy with, and we of course adhere to their policies on this. This document contains information and outlines procedures for online youth-work both within the church and outreach in the wider community.

When doing youth-work online, it can take a number of different forms. The guidance from Youthscape refers to online youth-work looking like:

- Meeting as a group via online video-call
- Connecting with individuals and groups via messaging apps
- Broadcasting activities and/or video on online social platforms
- Video calls with a young person and two approved youth-workers

A concern which is often overlooked in today's world is for those who have not got reliable and consistent access to technology, and therefore an issue can be that these individuals are left out. In the case of online youth-work, as with face-to-face youth-work also, the aim should be for everyone to be able to be equally included. Of course, during a pandemic when meeting face-to-face is not safely possible, we will try our best to make resources as accessible as possible for young people and their families. Meeting and/or providing resources online should mean we can reach more young people and families during the current situation.

There are risks that need to be addressed and considered in any form of youth-work. Online youth-work risks include the following (as mentioned in Youthscape's guidance):

- Grooming/sexual exploitation
- Sharing of personal contact details
- Inappropriate conversations between young people and also youth leaders
- Potential allegations about a youth worker

- Use of applications and online systems with minimum age restrictions
- Potential facilitating of abusive/unkind behaviour (cyber-bullying)
- Particular risks with children in care and/or known to children's services.

There are numerous ways in which we should work to minimize risks and deal appropriately with any issues. **It is imperative that all who are involved in youth-work teams should be aware of and adhere to the Tenpenny Benefice policies, and be appropriately DBS/safeguarding-checked (this must be cleared with Head Safeguarding Officer, Nick Berry and Assistant Safeguarding Officer, Julie Thompson).**

A code of conduct is something which should be in place for all youth-groups that meet. Whilst in face-to-face meetings this is something the young people should be used to adhering to, a code of conduct also needs to be adapted to work online, including points that will help to make the online 'space' a safe and respectful one. For example, points around respectful modes of behaviour and speech, appropriate physical presentation e.g. clothing, venue, environment and timings, etc... need to be included. Further information on this is included on pages 4-5.

Youth-leaders should be supervised, which means preferably no single-working online. It is very unlikely that a meeting should need to take place between an individual youth worker and a young person. **If such need for a meeting should arise, this meeting would need to be passed by the Safeguarding Team and the youth-worker's line management before it takes place, and reviewed afterwards also. The parent/guardian of the young person/s should also be aware of the meeting, including the time and those involved before it takes place.**

As mentioned above, one-to-one calls with young people should be avoided. **Accounts of notes covering all call and the call content should be securely held and any safeguarding issues dealt with. If a conversation needs to be audio/visual recorded, the young person and their parent/carer should be involved and give permission (plus social workers if relevant) and GDPR policies adhered to.** Church of England guidance states to avoid recording calls where possible, but this should be in a professional manner if recording is necessary. **All data should be stored securely and password-protected, according to GDPR policies.**

Personal online accounts should not be used. Any interaction and involvement with youth-work should happen through organisational/professional accounts. For example, the youth-worker would never use their personal accounts on social media to interact with young people. All engagement with young people should take place through the designated youth-worker and/or Benefice accounts, on social media and on emails, etc... **Any individuals helping by attending an online event should also access the event using an account set up by the youth-work team. The log in details (usernames/passwords) to all organisational accounts should be made known to the safeguarding teams, so that they can access these at any time. This ensures that any private messages/interactions which may occur can be monitored by more than one professional.** Whilst guidance is that organisational devices should preferably be used, this is not possible in many situations, as we do not have organisational devices at home, and therefore it is essential that the correct organisational accounts are used from any personal devices when interacting with young people.

Group calls are most preferable with online youth-work. Records of attendance of both young people and adults must be made and stored securely. Additional key workers should be present in the room, and also parents/carers should be notified (via email, for example) of each meeting before it takes place. If it is possible for a parent/carer to be present at the young person's home during the call, this would be ideal. However, sending a notification to parents/carers to notify them that a meeting is taking place, and who to contact should they have any concerns, should always be sent. **Recording of group calls should not be made unless there is a compelling reason, and all on the call should be notified. The same amount of workers (child:staff ration) is needed online as is needed offline working.** Our current ratio that we work with for face-to-face youth-work is at least one approved adult leader for every eight young people.

The call organiser must have the ability to mute/block participants in the event that a participant displays or shares anything unsuitable/illegal, or begins acting inappropriately in some way. Chat modes should be disabled where possible. Calls should also be password protected, and online events/call details will not be advertised on social media/websites, etc... to avoid random attendees. When using Zoom, passwords are automatically six characters long, but should be made ten digits long to comply with the Church of England guidelines. When using Zoom or Microsoft Teams, the waiting-room option should be used and the meeting should be locked when everyone has joined – therefore it would be useful to know who plans on attending beforehand to enable this to efficiently happen. The Benefice Zoom account will always be used. Participant screen-sharing should be disabled – if any resources need sharing to members, this should be sent to the host beforehand and arranged with them for the host to share.

Any applications used should be age-appropriate. Many social media systems have age-restrictions, and whilst many young people use these outside of these restrictions, any work we do through these must adhere to all of the age-restrictions.

Links should be made available wherever possible to ensure that young people can freely contact us and say if they feel unsafe. It is best if this contact is someone approved who is not the youth-worker, to allow the young person to make a complaint against the youth-worker, should the need to. For this reason, it would be best to have Nick Berry and Julie Thompson as appropriate safeguarding contacts (email addresses will be made available).

Arrangements should be periodically reviewed by the youth worker, any team and PCC to identify any poor practice/challenges to positive and safe engagement online.

We will seek to avoid interactive online broadcasting wherever possible, and we will use Youtube for live/video resources. Video resources can be made available via our Tenpenny Benefice pages and Youth Worker account, by Youtube links being shared on them, but there will be no interactive live posting. Any live streams must be through Youtube, and not through Facebook Live or Instagram Live, for example. This is to prevent inappropriate comments being posted during

streams, as this is something which is not possible to manage. By using Youtube for streaming, we reduce the risk of this occurring.

Details and names of young people should never be shared publicly. We cannot avoid young people commenting or interacting with posts, but we will never share the full names or details of young people ourselves.

When using messaging software, the Benefice policies should always be adhered to, including but not limited to, the Benefice safeguarding policy, social media policy, etc... Two approved adults should always be involved in communications with young people, including on chat conversations be that a parent/carer, youth worker/youth team member and/or safeguarding team member. (Whatsapp is encrypted and can be used for easy group messaging. This is a good system to use – however, I would only feel comfortable using this if I have a work smart-phone. At the moment I only have a basic Nokia work phone, and it is inappropriate and goes against good practice to consider using my personal phone. This is something which needs addressing, and so we will not be using Whatsapp until then. I will update this document if/when this becomes a possibility.)

Expected ways of communicating with young people on online platforms:

- Youtube videos
- Whatsapp (when possible with work phone)
- Social media platforms (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook)
- Emails (via youthworker@tenpennyvillages.uk)
- Zoom
- Microsoft Teams

Consents and permissions:

- **As mentioned previously, parents/carers should be notified that these online calls/events are taking place, which leaders are going to be involved, and who to contact should they have any concerns. We need to look into an online form system (which I am currently researching) which means that parents/carers can sign to say they are happy for their young person(s) to take part in any of these that take place. I will update this document when this becomes available.**

Codes of conduct for acceptable use (would also be useful for young people/team to add to these during meetings if they feel they want to – would update this document if so):

Young people:

- Please make sure the location of where you are is neutral e.g. in a living room preferably. If you have to be on the call from your bedroom please make sure the background is appropriate on your camera.
- Online groups, just like with face-to-face groups, are meant to be safe spaces. What we discuss within the groups, or what an individual shares, should stay between the group, unless a leader thinks that you or someone else is at risk of harm. This also means that no screenshots should be taken or shared with other people.
- Please dress appropriately and in clothes that you would be comfortable wearing to youth group – avoid PJs.
- Please keep microphones muted as much as possible during group sessions – the leaders will want to ensure everyone gets time to talk equally, and that people are taking turns to talk, so that everyone can get the most out of, and contribute equally, to the session.

Teams:

- Arrive to online meetings five minutes early, to ensure that enough approved adults are in the online room before youth are admitted.
- Please stay behind for five minutes at the end of the session, for debriefing and discussing any possible concerns/action points.
- Be inclusive – encourage all young people to equally have a say.
- Dress appropriately – ensure you wear clothes that you would wear if doing youth-work face-to-face.
- Use appropriate language and be positive – don't swear or use any derogatory language.
- Be fully present – 'Zoom fatigue' is a real thing! We will ensure that groups are not really long and do not run back to back – please try to be fully present during the session and avoid distractions such as answering emails or answering phone calls.
- Keep confidentiality – just as is written in the young peoples' code of conduct above, what we discuss in the group should stay between the group to strive for a safe space, unless you are concerned about a young person or another individual involved. Please notify the team leader as soon as possible, who can then notify the safeguarding team.
- Do not make promises to young people.
- If others can overhear the conversation on the call, please wear headphones to protect confidentiality.
- Choose an appropriate location for video – choose a neutral backdrop and try to minimize any background noise.
- Make sure there are at least two approved adults present in video session.
- Breakout rooms should not occur, unless there are two adults in each 'room'.
- The team leader must keep a written record of the meeting – this should include a brief summary of the session content and any questions/concerns/observations that arise.
- Do not record any images from the meeting.
- Do not take any screenshots or images of young people as we do not have permission for this and this can create problems surrounding GDPR, etc...
- Do not set up any separate one-to-one contact outside the meeting with young people.
- Do not share your direct personal contact details – only log in using one of the allocated organisational accounts.
- Be aware of Benefice policies and Church of England guidance.

How to respond to concerns professionally and appropriately:

- **All concerns need noting and filed adhering to our current safeguarding policies. All team members involved in each call/event must be aware of this, and notify the host/team leader of any concerns. Any concerns should be discussed immediately with Nick Berry and Julie Thompson, ensuring all notes are stored securely and handled appropriately.**

The current Church of England advice on video-calling states that risk assessments should be thoroughly carried out. We will be conducting a risk assessment before any online activities take place, and these will be discussed and checked by Andrew Fordyce and the churchwardens beforehand. PCC approval should be sought for policies, the Safeworking Practice Code should be observed, and the lone-working rule should also be observed.

Good resources for young people and their parents/carers include:

- 'thinkuknow'
- Parents Project
- Childnet International
- ThirtyOne:Eight
- Youthscape resources

There are others, but these ones are suggested by guidance and I would feel comfortable recommending these to families and young people.

Whilst young people aged 13 years and above do not legally need consent from a carer regarding video-calling, this is still advised, and I feel it is necessary and essential to be the safest we possibly can be in our online work, for both young people and leaders.

Whilst the Church of England cannot officially recommend any social media platforms, their guidance states that Zoom and Microsoft Teams seem more suitable for video calls/meetings, and so we have reflected this in our policy. **It is important to remember that Zoom, etc... are just tools, and so other policies should all still be adhered to.**

GDPR is always applicable – all attendees should be aware of different apps and their privacy policies/notices. Also, participants should be made aware of 'cookies' and encouraged to use necessary cookie settings only. Information of this kind should be included in notification emails sent to parents/carers.

Where possible, it is suggested to use parents/carers email addresses. However, this is not always possible and could be a challenge, as there will inevitably be some individuals who log on using their email addresses. It is essential therefore that leaders personal accounts are NOT used, and

that we have safely recorded the email addresses of all young people and leaders who attend. We may also at times contact young people via their email addresses; however, permission from their parents/carers will be sought for this to occur in the online form (mentioned above).

It is important to know who is in the meeting – therefore, camera access is important to ensure that the person logged on to the call is who they say they are. If a young person cannot use or access a video camera facility for a genuine reason, then verification is necessary with the host and the safeguarding team before the call takes place. It is also important to note that functions exist on Zoom such as ‘Expel Participant’ and ‘Attendee on Hold’ – these can be used if needed.

Safety is, and should always be, the highest priority. As churches striving to reflect God’s love for all, we will not just do the bare minimum but strive to make resources safe and accessible for all. For this to be truly considered we need to work at re-imagining our youth-work, how we can continue this mostly online, and maintain contact and networking safely. Churches doing a lot of outreach work are particularly in a difficult position, as outreach and outward-facing activities are a struggle during this pandemic (e.g. we can’t safely do drop-in style sessions, it is harder to make things accessible to new people in person at the moment, etc...)

Everything is of course confusing and challenging for everyone at the moment. It’s a good time to be innovative, creative and re-imagine what this ministry and engagement with our communities can look like at the current time. Managing risks and risk assessments for both team and young people is the trickiest at the moment – unfortunately, for a whole plethora of reasons in our situation it is not realistic or sensible face-to-face at the moment, but online this is more achievable.

Policy reviewed and agreed July 2022

Sources:

National Church of England guidance on online youth work <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/Video%20Calling.pdf>
<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/Being%20connected%20with%20ZOOM%20safely.pdf>

Current government guidance on youth work in out-of-school setting
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/protective-measures-for-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

National Youth Agency Guidance on youth work during COVID (this is updated every week)
<https://nya.org.uk/guidance/>

Youthscape & ThirtyOne:Eight advice - <https://www.youthscape.co.uk/store/product/safer-places-online>

Church of England Webinar -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGx5XdJcu7M&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR3nFxnvdPvPb6K3cu0QbKF6bl9xjKSjHGEgkEGQByfZqTf-2lvMzl5fUo>

Additional Resources:

Church of England Zoom Document contains a helpful draft risk assessment template.

Good resources available on Gov.uk website for families.

Example risk assessments and codes of conduct for online working from Diocesan Youth Adviser.