

St Hilda, Warley Woods

The Safe Use of Social Media and Mobile Phones Policy and Procedures

Date of Approval by the PCC: 3rd December 2020

Date of Last Review: 26th March 2026

Date of Next Review: March 2027 (or sooner if necessary)

This policy is based on guidance in the Church of England 'Parish Safeguarding Handbook' Section 12 (2018), the Church of England 'Safer Environments' Practice Guide (2019) and the Church of England Birmingham 'A Guide to using Social Media for Leaders and Helpers' (2019).

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1. Applicability of this Policy and Procedures

1.1 This Policy and Procedures apply to Church Officers

A Church Officer is a person who is appointed or elected to a role on behalf of the Church, whether lay or ordained, paid or unpaid.

1.2 When this Policy and Procedures apply to a paid employee

It applies to a paid employee when they are acting in the course of their employment or in a private capacity when they could be regarded as representing the Church.

1.3 When this Policy and Procedures apply to a lay person who has been appointed or elected to a Church role

It applies to a lay person in a Church role when they are representing the Church, but not when they are acting in a private capacity and would not be regarded as acting on behalf of the Church.

2. PCC Approval of the use of Social Media

2.1 Use of Social Media activities

Social media activities may be used on behalf of the Church as a way of enabling users to create and share content and keep in touch with other users. For many, it is an extension of physical face to face relationships.

Social media activities can provide an important way for the Church to engage with its community and worshippers.

2.2 Social Media approved for Church use

The PCC approves the use of the following forms of social media on behalf of the Church:

YouTube, Zoom, WhatsApp, Facebook (including Messenger), Instagram, Skype, Microsoft Teams, Facetime, Twitter/X.

As the Church's website is currently not interactive, it is not considered to be social media and therefore this policy does not apply to it.

2.3 Social Media Team

The PCC appoints a social media team', chaired by the Incumbent, with a membership selected by the Chair and approved by the PCC. Members of the social media team are required to have completed the Church of England Birmingham: Basic Awareness and Foundations safeguarding training modules.

The role of the social media team is to oversee all social media activity undertaken in the name of St Hilda's Church and to monitor for inappropriate activity. The social media team will report regularly to the PCC and to the Parish Safeguarding Team.

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On 13th March 2025, the PCC appointed the following members of the social media team: Rev. Jenni Crewes (Chair), Marian Hills and James Atkinson.

2.4 Approval of Social Media activities

The PCC approves the social media team undertaking the following social media activities.

- live-streaming and pre-recording of services or aspects of services e.g. sermons to enable people to watch from other locations,
- writing or commenting on a blog, whether it is the writer's blog or the blog of another person,
- taking part in discussions on web forums or message boards.
- posting content on our Facebook and Instagram pages, including photos, stories and links to appropriate content.

2.5 Written permission for sharing photos and images on social media platforms

The PCC agrees to photos and images of children and young people being shared on social media platforms only after written consent has been given, electronically or on paper, on the St Hilda's child photography consent form, by a child's or a young person's parent, guardian or carer who is legally authorised to give this consent on behalf of the child or young person. A legally authorised parent, guardian or carer has the right to refuse this consent or to revoke it at any time. A copy of the St Hilda's child photography consent form can be found in Appendix D of this policy and procedures.

A database will be maintained by the social media team, with the chair of the social media team holding responsibility to ensure that this is up to date.

It is the PCC's policy that before photographs showing adults' faces are taken, which might be shown in public, adults will be given an opportunity to ask not to be photographed. The social media team will maintain a record of the names of adults who have asked never to be included in photographs which might be shown in public.

3. PCC Approval of the use of mobile phones

3.1 Reasons for the provision of phones dedicated for Church purposes

A dedicated phone helps boundaries to be maintained by keeping Church communications and accounts separate from those which are personal. It allows for the phone to be switched off outside working hours and for usage to be accountable. The Church phone can be a public number. Where the PCC provides a Church officer with a phone, this should be the only number given out when undertaking duties on behalf of the Church. Any exceptions to this must be discussed with the Church officer's Named Person.

3.2 Mobile phones provided by the PCC for Church purposes

The PCC will supply mobile phones to Church officers, when requested and after approval, in roles which are likely to make calls to or receive calls from children, young people and vulnerable adults who are unable to fully appreciate and/or work within boundaries. This may include some adults with a mental health illness or disability or those with a learning disability. A list of current Church officer roles provided with mobile phones is included in Appendix B.

3.3 Additions to this list

The PCC will also consider whether to supply a mobile phone to Church officers where an individual volunteer is uncomfortable with a wide range of individuals knowing their personal telephone number. Church officers who consider they should have a Church mobile phone for their work for the Church, or who are uncomfortable with their private number being widely known, should raise this with [the Incumbent](#) or a member of the parish safeguarding team.

3.4 Use of personal mobile phones

There may be times when it is necessary for a Church officer who has not been issued with a Church mobile phone to make telephone calls on behalf of the Church to children, young people or vulnerable adults. Before making such a call, they should consider whether it is appropriate to withhold their personal phone number.

In these circumstances, Church officers should:

- be clear as to when they are “representing the Church” or acting in a private capacity,
- set and help others to set appropriate boundaries
- use common sense and be aware of the risks
- follow this policy and procedure as applicable and in particular the guidance in Appendix A.

Where the making of such calls is a regular part of a Church officer's role, both the Church officer and their Named Person should discuss with the parish safeguarding team whether to make a request to the PCC for a Church mobile phone to be supplied.

3.5 Concerns

Messages or conversations (whether on a Church mobile or a personal phone) that raise safeguarding concerns should be saved (in the case of messages) or a written record made as soon as possible after the conversation (in the case of phone conversations). The message and/or written record must be passed to the Named Person (if there is one for the Church officer concerned) or the Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator or the Incumbent or, if none of these are available, the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor.

3.6 Parish Safeguarding Team mobile phone

A member of the Parish Safeguarding Team will hold a Church phone, the number of which is published on the parish website, posters in the Church buildings and the weekly pew sheet.

3.7 A Church email account

A Church email account may be a viable alternative for some Church officer roles, where an email address and not a phone number is made publicly available, so that individuals could send an email message and ask someone to call them back. A Church officer who is using their own phone on behalf of the Church should consider whether it is appropriate to withhold their number when calling back. A list of current Church email accounts can be seen in Appendix C.

4. Responsibilities of Church Officers in relation to the safe use of social media and mobile phones

4.1 Confidentiality

Subject to the duty to report safeguarding concerns, Church officers should maintain appropriate confidentiality in relation to their social media activities.

4.2 Safeguarding

Where there is concern that a young person or adult is either at risk of abuse, or poses a risk of abuse to others, Church officers must always follow the Church safeguarding policy and procedures, particularly in terms of:

- ensuring that all safeguarding concerns are brought to the immediate attention of the Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator,
- following safeguarding procedures where there is concern that a child, young person under age 18 or adult is at risk of abuse or poses a risk of abuse to others.

4.3 A Church Officer's responsibilities in relation to their Named Person (See also Section 5. below 'Named Persons and their responsibilities')

- **Sharing account names and passwords:** A Church officer should consider with their Named Person whether their Named Person should or should not have awareness of account names and passwords of social media accounts operated by the Church officer. This is so that the Named Person can, if necessary, log into the account to monitor the communications.
- **Sharing messages and regular meetings:** A Church officer who is in one to one or group social media communication with children, young people under age 18 or vulnerable adults, should share messages and have regular meetings with their Named Person to ensure transparency and accountability.

4.4 Awareness of risks

Church officers using social media and phones should ensure they avoid the following risks:

- forming inappropriate relationships
- saying inappropriate things including offensive, sexual or suggestive comments
- blurring the boundaries between public work or ministry and private life
- grooming
- impersonation
- bullying and harassment
- expressing personal views which criticise the Church

4.5 Guidance

Guidance for Church officers is set out in Appendix A of this policy and procedures.

5. Named Persons and their responsibilities

5.1 Appointment of 'Named Persons'

Where there are social networking sites or similar online groups set up on the Church's behalf, the PCC is required to appoint a 'Named Person' to whom a Church officer is accountable for their use of social media and with whom the nature of all communications must be shared.

A Named Person must be a Church officer. They may be a Church leader or a person providing supervision for the Church Officer who is accountable to them for their use of social media.

Appendix B provides a list of appointed 'Named Persons' for the Church Officers listed in that Appendix.

5.2 Responsibilities of Named Persons

- **Account name and password:** The Named Person for each Church Officer should consider, in conjunction with the Church Officer, whether or not the Named Person should or should not be aware of name(s) and password(s) of social media accounts operated by the Church Officer. This is so that they can if necessary, log onto the account to monitor the communications. If there is a difference of opinion between the Church Officer and the Named Person as to whether the Named Person should be given access to the account, this should be referred to the parish safeguarding team who will determine who would be best to deal with the issue.
- **A proactive approach:** To ensure transparency and accountability, a Named Person must be proactive in fulfilling this role, including holding regular meetings with the Church Officer for whom they are the Named Person, where that Church Officer is in one to one or group social media communication with children, young people under age 18 or vulnerable adults.
- **Maintaining confidentiality:** subject to the duty to report safeguarding concerns.
- **Following Safeguarding Policy and Procedures:** Where there is concern that a young person or adult is either at risk of abuse, or poses a risk of abuse to others, Named Persons must comply with the Church safeguarding policy and procedures, particularly in terms of ensuring that all safeguarding concerns are brought to the immediate attention of the Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator.

6. Definitions

In this Policy, the following terms, which are indicated by capitalised words have the following meanings.

Church: includes St Hilda's Church, St Hilda's Parochial Church Council (PCC), The Church of England – Birmingham and the Church of England House of Bishops.

Church Officer: a person who is appointed or elected to a role on behalf of the Church, whether lay or ordained, paid or unpaid. (As in 1.1 of this policy).

Named Person: a person with whom messages may be shared or regular meetings set up, for each Church Officer who is in one to one or group media communication with children and young people under age 18 or with Vulnerable Adults, to ensure transparency and accountability. A Named Person may be a Church leader or a

person providing supervision for the Church Officer and should also be a Church Officer. (As in 5.1 of this Policy).

Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator: the person appointed by the PCC to work with the Incumbent and the PCC to provide support, advice and guidance within the parish on all safeguarding matters relating to children, young people and Vulnerable Adults, to liaise with the Bishop's Safeguarding Advisor and ensure that the PCC's requirements from the Church of England Birmingham and the House of Bishops and are met.

Parish Safeguarding Team: The Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator and one or more parish safeguarding officers work together as a team on responding to safeguarding matters, helping the PCC to meet its safeguarding requirements and raising safeguarding awareness within the Church community and wider.

Safeguarding Policy: Up to date versions of St Hilda's safeguarding policies and procedures are available on the Church and Church Hall noticeboards and on A Church Near You website www.achurchnearyou.com (type in or click on 'St Hilda, Warley Woods').

Social Media: websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

Vulnerable Adult: 'The term 'vulnerable adult' refers to a person age 18 or over whose ability to protect themselves from violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation is significantly impaired through physical or mental disability, illness, old age, emotional fragility, distress or otherwise; and for that purpose, the reference to being impaired is to being temporarily or indefinitely impaired.' (*Section 6 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016*).

Appendix A

Guidance for Church Officers

- 1. Be vigilant:** and keep your eyes open.
- 2. Maintain the utmost integrity:** i.e. honesty, consistency, accountability, confidentiality. Treat online communication with children, young people and adults as you would communication that is face to face.
- 3. Report any safeguarding concerns:** to the Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator and the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor.
- 4. Use passwords and log off promptly after use:** to ensure that nobody else can use social media pretending to be you.

5. Draw clear boundaries around your Social Media usage associated with your private life and your use of social media for public ministry. In particular, in your role as a Church Officer:

- where provided with a Church mobile or operating on a Church social Media account, keep that account and profiles on it separate from your personal social media accounts;
- do not use a personal Facebook or any other personal social media account to communicate with children or young people on a one to one basis;
- do not add children, young people or vulnerable adults as new friends on your personal accounts;
- when communicating with vulnerable adults, consider carefully with your Named Person whether the use of social media is appropriate, given the adult's vulnerability and consider what boundaries it is appropriate to maintain;
- do not continually and obsessively monitor someone on Facebook and/or search for and through the profile of anyone without legitimate reason;
- do not say or post anything on social media that you would not be happy saying in a public meeting, to someone's face, writing in a local newspaper or on headed notepaper; and
- do not comment on photos or posts or share content in any way that would be inappropriate.

6. Only use an approved Church/ministry account to communicate with children, young people and vulnerable adults:

- The Named Person should be able to access social media accounts used to communicate with children and young people and review conversations. The account should be visible to those using it, including young people and their parents.
- Advise young people that any communication will be viewed by all users.
- Save messages and threads on social networking sites so that if required, you can provide evidence of your exchange to the Named Person.

7. Obtain written consent from adults or the parents or carers of children or young people:

- to use and store their information and images from activities or events in official church publications or on the Church's social media, website and displays
- to use telephone, text message, email and other messaging services to communicate with them

- to allow children or young people to connect to the Church's social media pages.
- to make available on the internet, recordings which have been made for Church Services.

The person compiling an Order of Service will ask each person contributing a recording 'Do you consent to us using this recording which will be made available on the internet via (*mode*) for a period of (*length of time*), after which it will be deleted?'

The person contributing will be asked to confirm on the email by which they send their recording that they consent to the use of their recording as stated.

8. Avoid one to one communication with a child or young person. Use visual media (e.g. Skype, Facetime, Zoom, WhatsApp, Messenger) only in group settings.

9. Use clear and unambiguous language and avoid abbreviations. This applies to all communications. Abbreviations could be misinterpreted.

10. Do not allow content to contain or share links to other sites that contain any of the following:

- libellous, defamatory, bullying or harassing statements;
- breaches of copyright or data protection;
- material of an illegal nature;
- offensive sexual or abusive references;
- inappropriate language; or
- anything which may be harmful to a child, young person or vulnerable adult, or which may bring the Church into disrepute or compromise its reputation.

11. If inappropriate material is received through social networking sites, Social Media or other electronic means: do not delete the inappropriate material and show it immediately to the Named Person, Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator or, if appropriate, the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor.

Appendix B

Approved Church Officer roles and appointed 'Named Persons' for the use of Church telephones and Social Media

Church Officers who should be provided with a mobile phone

The following Church Officer roles are likely to involve receiving telephone calls from or making telephone calls to children, young people and vulnerable adults

- Vicar/Incumbent
- Parish Safeguarding Coordinator
- CAMEO leader

Named Persons

Each Church Officer who is provided with a mobile phone has an allocated Named Person to whom they report.

Church Officer Role	Named Person
Vicar/Incumbent	Area Dean
Parish Safeguarding Coordinator	Vicar/Incumbent
Cameo Co-ordinator	Vicar/Incumbent

Appendix C Church email addresses and telephone numbers

Email address	Phone number
church@sainthildawarleywoods.co.uk	
vicar@sainthildawarleywoods.co.uk	07377 363915
revjennicrewes@gmail.com	07377 363915
dianereeves89@gmail.com	07977 464696
sthildasafeguarding@gmail.com	07942 919308
pccsecretary@sainthildawarleywoods.co.uk	
treasurer@sainthildawarleywoods.co.uk	
sthildascameo@gmail.com	
sthildasbooking@gmail.com	

Appendix D



Child Photography Consent Form

This form collects your consent for your child to be photographed during church services and events. Content may be shared online via St Hilda's website and social media, Church of England Birmingham and Church of England platforms, or local and national media.

You may withdraw this consent at any time by contacting: revjennicrewes@gmail.com

All personal data will be handled in accordance with the UK GDPR.

1. Child's full name:

2. Do you give your consent for your child to be photographed? (Please circle yes or no)

Yes / No

3. How may your child's image be used? (Please tick)

- The parish website
- Parish social media platforms
- Church of England websites and social media
- Local or national press
- In print for church promotional use - flyers, posters etc.
- Local or national press (in print and online)
- N/A I do not give consent

4. Your full name and relationship to child:

Please circle: parent / guardian / carer / other

By signing below, I confirm I am legally authorised to give this consent on behalf of the child and confirm that I understand that my child's image could be used as indicated above and I can withdraw consent at any time.

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Signature:

Date: