
Safeguarding Children Groups using Zoom

Policy Aims:

- To ensure that all staff, volunteers and members adhere to good practice and recognise signs of abuse regarding the use of Zoom calls and report any concerns, which will then be acted upon by the appropriate authorities.
- To ensure that all staff, volunteers and members have had the appropriate safeguarding checks, training and an awareness of our procedures.
- To ensure that correct procedures are in place across the Circuit and that local Church Councils are clear about their responsibilities.

Scope:

This policy applies to all church volunteers and staff who may be directly or indirectly working with children using Zoom.

Every person has a value and dignity which comes directly from the creation of humans in God's own image and likeness. Christians see this potential as fulfilled by God's re-creation of us in Christ. Among other things this implies a duty to value all people as bearing the image of God and therefore to protect them from harm.

There have been a number of ongoing issues/concerns regarding the use of Zoom and other virtual communication/video conferencing facilities by children and young people. I am pleased to let you know that the Connexion has now researched the matter and obtained 'conditional' agreement from Zoom for such use. I stress that this agreement is predicated on the consent/agreement of a supervising adult. Updated guidance is contained in this document.

Step 1: Contact parents and carers

Contact the parents and carers of those under 16 via email or direct messaging, informing them of your intention to create a virtual meeting group. Seek their support and permission to do this. Explain how, when and where the meeting will be happening so everyone is clear about how it will take place. Encourage parents/carers to talk with their children about these new arrangements. Let them know who they can contact if they have a question or concern. It is essential that they are on board and able to set boundaries that they feel are appropriate for their children whilst they are on the Zoom chat (eg. the parent might want the child to participate in the Zoom chat from a visible space in the house or, if the child attends the meeting from their bedroom, they might want them to leave the door open, or they might just want to check in with the child at the end of the meeting).

Ask parents/carers to complete and return **this consent form** (see appendix A) before their child participates in a Zoom gathering. You can use the following text in your email for parents/carers, to offer an explanation of the expected supervision:

"Parents/carers we ask that you supervise* your child's use of the Zoom account and are aware of when, how and why they are using the account, ensuring that you keep the log in details and do not share this with your child. Each time your child wants to attend a session facilitated by your church or

organisation. You should log them in for the session, do not give them the log in details. please ensure that you read and follow the Methodist Church guidelines outlined in our **Zoom Safeguarding policy** outlined below.

- *Ensure there are at least two leaders, who have been recruited using the Safer Recruitment processes (references and DBS checks) in each virtual meeting (and make sure the leaders 'arrive' before the group does).*

You will need parental consent to include their child in any virtual meeting space and, for those under 16, the parents/carers will need to be the Zoom account holders and the link for the meeting should be sent to them. We also recommend that parents/guardians are asked to supervise the Zoom call – **the processes outlined here**, if correctly followed, will include this.*

- *If a young person says something that causes concern and seems like it could lead to a safeguarding disclosure, then tell them you would like to talk to them about that more later – away from the wider group. Encourage them to stay online after the main meeting and ask them to tell you more. Again, you need to make sure there are two leaders present for the conversation – perhaps one asking questions and the other taking comprehensive notes. Follow safeguarding procedure as you would at any other time and contact your District Safeguarding Officer and, if appropriate and safe, the parents and carers as soon as you can.*
- *Consider inclusivity and accessibility – how can you make sure all your group is able to fully participate? For instance, you may want to consider: Does everyone have access to a device that will enable them to take part? Do any of your young people have additional needs that might prevent them from taking part fully? Does the time of the meeting align with the rhythms of the families you work with?*
- *Do not record the meeting. Most video conferencing software allows for the session host to record the goings on, but this would require separate permission for data capture and there are additional issues around storage, GDPR etc.*
- *In the settings for your Zoom meeting you should disable the one-to-one anonymous chat function so that participants cannot send private messages that are not seen by the wider group.*

You may also want to consider disabling screen share and only allowing this if needed for a particular activity.
- *Use your knowledge of the young people you work with to set safe boundaries for the Zoom chat that you feel are appropriate. For instance, for some young people it may be perfectly appropriate for them to participate in the virtual meeting from their bedroom (perhaps with the door left open). However, if you have young people who have a history of struggling to set appropriate boundaries in their relationships with adults, it might be a good idea to say, as part of your ground rules for the whole group (do not single a specific young person out), that their participation in the Zoom chat should take place from a public part of the house, not their bedroom.*

Zoom collects information about its users and has its own privacy terms and conditions to which members must adhere. Please review **Zoom's privacy terms and conditions** carefully before registering, and ask parents/carers to do so also.

The session leaders will ensure that they comply with the Methodist Church Safeguarding procedures and policies in the same way that they would if meeting face to face.

In order for your child to participate in distance-based youth group experiences, you will need to provide the following:

- a computer, mobile, or tablet device with access to the Internet
- a free Zoom licence, with you as parent/carer/guardian holding the account.

It is your responsibility to log in securely each time your child attends a session and to log out when the session has ended.

*** By supervision we mean:** The parent/carer holds the responsibility to log in to the Zoom meeting and agrees to not share the log in details. The parent/guardian is also responsible for logging out of the Zoom call at the end of a session and checking that privacy settings haven't been changed and their passwords are not saved. The parent/carer is to manage the Zoom account and to ensure that they are at home while the child or young person is attending the session. Where possible the child/young person should be in a communal space or in a room with the doors left open when accessing the session via their laptop, computer or other device.

Step 2: Create the group

Shortly before it is time for everyone to join in, send the Zoom link to the parents/carers of those under 16 years and directly to those who are 16 or above. As leader of the group you have control over when the video meeting starts and ends and no interaction can take place unless you have opened the space first or after you have closed it.

Step 3: Group content

The first meeting should include a discussion of the rules everyone will be expected to adhere to: many of those when meeting face to face will equally apply here. These should be kept simple and be for the benefit of all involved with online safety as paramount. Each time you meet subsequently, remind participants of these rules.

There are many great ways to create community together such as: sharing life updates or presenting artwork, posing questions, prayer, reading scripture, offer something with an encouragement to join in and respond.

There are many resources available giving further ideas and inspiration.

Ideally keep these meeting times shorter than usual (half an hour to 40 minutes may be enough) so be creative in finding ways to help everyone engage. Asking good open questions such as 'What's the best thing you've done since we last met?' can generate interaction.

You may want to include some time when parents and carers are present (especially when meeting with under 11 year olds) so they are actively involved for part of the time and observers during the rest if they wish. As time goes on you may wish to consider asking your young people to take a lead and inviting them to create a space for meeting that is more peer led. Give some consideration to how to divide the time up best for those taking part.

Step 4: Keep a record

It is best practice to keep a log of your Zoom meetings. Who attended? How long did it last? Also include a brief description of what was covered and if any issues arose.

Step 5: Takeaways

Give some thought to what you can offer the group as a takeaway from your time together. Could you set a task or challenge? This could be reported back on next time. How could everyone be praying

for each other in the meantime, is there a fun way to capture this? Let everyone know that as the group leader you'll remain in touch with parents and carers between meetings so they're fully informed of what will be happening.

Step 6: Further contact

Staying in touch with parents in between meetings is important so they're fully informed of upcoming dates and times of when the virtual group will gather. This can be done via email or direct messaging. Underline that, as the group leader, you will have no direct contact with the children themselves outside of the virtual group meeting.

IMPORTANT: Due to the increase in 'Zoombombing' it is vitally important that you only share the meeting invite link with the parents/young people in your group - and you must stress to them the importance of not sharing the link beyond the group.

Signed: (*Superintendent Minister*)

Dated:

Date for review: February Circuit Meeting

Parental consent form for Zoom activities and sessions.

Details of child/young person

Full name:	
Date of birth:	
School year:	
Address:	

Consent

I have had an explanation by a group leader of how the above-named child will be participating in Zoom gatherings and sessions.

I give my consent the above-named child to take part in Zoom gatherings and sessions as part of this group, with their group leader(s).

I understand and have read the Terms and Conditions for a Zoom licence (<https://zoom.us/terms>) and have read The Methodist Church guidance on Zoom (which can be found across a number of pages here: www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/children-youth-family-ministry/resources-and-help-for-lockdown-and-beyond/creating-safe-and-engaging-virtual-spaces-with-children-and-young-people/).

I give my consent for my child to participate in Zoom meetings provided by The Methodist Church or Uniformed organisation activity run by the Methodist Church [insert name of group/organisation and church]

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I understand that the individuals leading these sessions will be appropriately trained, will follow Methodist Church safeguarding protocols at all times and will have been safely recruited to their roles. I understand that if the above named child is under the age of 16 they will need to use my, or another parent/carer's, Zoom account to engage with these meetings and that I/they will supervise them in doing this (please read the Methodist Church Zoom guidance for a definition of supervision – which can be found using the link above).

Please see the Methodist Church privacy notice for how we use your personal data:
www.methodist.org.uk/privacy-and-cookie-policy/

Print name: _____

Relationship to participant: _____

Signature: _____