

6.8 Safeguarding children and young people online¹

The internet is constantly evolving and changing, and the Methodist Church recognises the benefits it brings of promoting opportunities for children and young people to engage in the life of the Church in a way that can be inclusive of all regardless of background and/or ability. However, the internet has also been the source of harm to children and young people and others vulnerable to harm and exploitation therefore, every care should be taken to minimise the risks it presents.

(Page 63) Those working with children and young people are strongly advised to follow the guidance set out below:

- When posting activity ideas for children or young people, ensure they comply with good safeguarding practice.
- Ensure that parents or carers are aware of what their children or young people are doing and have given their written permission in advance.
- Children and young people should be regularly informed and reminded of safe internet use and accessing social media. They must be encouraged to access websites such as NSPCC or ChildLine or talk to an adult if they have any concerns or fears.
- Warn children and young people about the dangers of giving out personal details on the internet.
- When demonstrations are being given, plan beforehand to ensure that all websites visited have material that is appropriate for the age group taking part.
- Use child-friendly search engines when asking children and young people to undertake their own searches on the internet. See Search Engine Watch for a list of other child friendly search engines.
- Where children and young people are encouraged to undertake subsequent searches on the internet at home, they must only do so with the knowledge of their parent or carer.
- Encourage children and young people to obtain parental consent if they wish to develop internet friends into face-to-face friendships. Even then, they should always be accompanied on any first meeting.

6.8.1 Digital images and the use of photographs/recordings online

Photography and video footage are important ways of recording Methodist activity and illustrating important moments in people's lives and the life of our Church. However, we must respect the rights of everyone to choose whether or not to be photographed or recorded. As a guide to good practice, please see the list below:

- Do not use children's names in photograph captions. If a child is named, do not use the image without written permission as images accompanied by personal information, such as the name of a child could be used to learn more about a child before grooming them for abuse.

¹ This document is an extract take from *Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church* pp. 62-64. Accessed at [Policies and guidance - Methodist Church](#) 12/8/2024.

Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Guidance for the Methodist Church

- Only use images of children in suitable clothing to reduce the risk of inappropriate use. Some activities, for example swimming and drama, present a much greater risk of potential misuse.
- For professional photographers or the press invited to an event, state in writing what you expect from them in relation to child protection.
- Do not allow photographers unsupervised access to children or approve photography sessions outside the event or at a child's home.

6.8.2 Consent for use of images (Page 64)

While the Church recognises that many sixteen to seventeen years-olds have significant responsibility for key decisions in their lives, in most circumstances, parents have a legal responsibility for their children up to the age of eighteen. If, after assessment of the young person's individual circumstances, a decision is made that it may not be appropriate for consent to be obtained by their parents, this should be discussed with a safeguarding officer. There may also be circumstances known to the legal parent or guardian relating to the use of images of which the young person is unaware. Therefore, if a decision is taken that a consent form is not required, parents must still be informed of the consent given by the young person in relation to photographs and images. This approach is in line with current NSPCC guidance.

Table 1:

Age of Child or Young Person	Consent Required
0 - 11 years	Parent or carer
12 - 17 years	Parent or carer & young person
16 - 17 years, living independently or estranged from parents	Young person & social worker, youth worker or appropriate adult