Working safely with young people online policy

This policy applies to all staff, trustees, team leaders, volunteers or anyone working with children online on behalf of Plymouth Vineyard Church. The purpose of this policy is:

- To protect children and young people who receive services from Plymouth Vineyard.
- To protect Plymouth Vineyard staff and volunteers.
- To provide staff and volunteers with overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding and child protection.

All those facilitating children/youth work via zoom should consider the following:

- When obtaining consent forms for new children/young people please forward a copy of 'what parents need to know about Zoom' to the parent/career.
- Use a meeting password to avoid 'zoom bombing'. The meeting ID could be made public and the meeting password shared in direct/private messages.
- Consider using the waiting room feature. The Waiting Room is just like it sounds: It's a virtual staging area, a front door that prevents people from joining a meeting until the host is ready.
- Disable private chat: Zoom has in-meeting chat for everyone or participants can message each other privately. Restrict participants' ability to chat amongst one another while the session is running.
- Prevent participants/young people from screen sharing. This can be turned on/off during a meeting using the host controls. There may be times when screen sharing would be useful.

General measures and advice

- Ensure that all teams who facilitate communication with young people online have a DBS check in place. The same rules apply as for face to face work with children.
- Do not invite young people to register for apps, software or platforms which are not age-appropriate for them (search at https://www.net-aware.org.uk/ if you are unsure).
- Try to use group conversations wherever possible.
- If one-on-one contact is necessary, have an extra leader as part of the chat who doesn't necessarily take part in conversations, but can ensure there is accountability.
- Avoid using emoji or icons that could be misleading eg. xx, LOL, 😊
- For contacting children and young people, it's best practice to use a church or organisation account so that multiple people could log in and maintain accountability. Avoid using personal accounts to contact children and young people where at all possible.
- Consider having a link to the Child Exploitation & Online Protection Centre (CEOP) or agencies such as Childline, NSPCC etc. This ensures that young people can report anything they are concerned about in regards the behaviour of a worker toward them.

Sources:

https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2020/03/20/keep-uninvited-guests-out-of-your-zoom-event/

Creating Safer Places Online (Youthscape & thirtyone:eight)

https://yfc.co.uk/safeguarding-online/

Policy was updated and approved on: **11/02/21**   **Next review: Feb 2021**

Signed: D Tucker