

# ***Social Media Policy***

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## 1.0 Introduction

The Diocese of Killaloe recognises the impact, involvement and influence that social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have on the lives of adults and young people (under 18 years). We also acknowledge their role in the way which especially young people interact with each other. There is great potential in the utilisation of these platforms to aid Parishes / Youth Ministry in deepening relationships, encouraging faith, and promoting opportunities and events for the Diocese of Killaloe. Our utilisation of these social media platforms will also aid in promoting positively the work that is actively being done by the Diocese of Killaloe and Youth Ministry.

However, we acknowledge the dangers and potential risks these platforms can pose to both our young people and to our Parish / Youth Ministry personnel. Therefore we recognise that the safeguarding of young people, parish personnel must be at the heart of our social media usage.

## 2.0 Guidelines for Parishes / Youth Ministry within the Diocese of Killaloe Using Social Media Platforms with Young People (Under 18's).

### 2.1 Facebook / Messenger

Any Parish / Youth Ministry Facebook account must be used for Parish / Youth Ministry purposes only and not as a Parish / Youth Ministry personnel personal account. All messages must be saved and kept, (both incoming and outgoing) and 'instant messenger' must not be used for one on one communication with young people or vulnerable adults. All contact with young people / vulnerable adults using Facebook must be kept appropriate. What is deemed as appropriate communication will be set out below. The Facebook account must not be utilised after 11pm. All one to one to communication with young people / vulnerable adult must be kept in the public eye in order to safeguard both the person and the worker. Communications must be done through the 'wall' function and it is advised that this is utilised to reply to any private messages which young people / vulnerable adults may have sent to the page. Messenger must not be used for individual or group chats. In all communications Emoji's must not be used e.g.LOL, BRB as these may be misinterpreted. In the event that a public wall post is inappropriate for

responding to a young person / vulnerable adult then the Parish / Youth Ministry employee should respond in the following ways;

Contact the parent/guardian.

Contact the Director of Safeguarding.

In an emergency contact the appropriate authorities.

Parish / Youth Ministry personnel are not permitted to direct message or accept/send friend requests to young people / vulnerable adults from their own personal Facebook account unless known to them personally outside of their role with the Diocese of Killaloe.

## 2.2 Twitter

Twitter accounts must only be used by the Parish / Youth Ministry only. Tweets sent from these accounts must be in line with the ethos and guiding principles of the Diocese of Killaloe. It is not to be utilised to endorse or promote the Parish / Youth Ministry personnel own interests. All ‘tweets’ must be saved and not deleted. All communication must be kept appropriate. The Twitter account must not be utilised after 11pm. Young people are free to ‘follow’ Parish / Youth Ministry Twitter account however Parishes or Youth Ministry cannot ‘follow’ any young person back. The accounts the Parish / Youth Ministry are allowed to ‘follow’ must be organisations or official twitter accounts e.g. @Pope Francis, @Alpha.

All communication with young people / vulnerable adults via Twitter must be done publicly and on the ‘twitter feed’. Twitter direct messaging must never be utilised. In all tweets Emoji’s must not be used e.g. LOL, YOLO, ☺ as these may be misinterpreted. However the use of appropriate ‘hash-tags’ is allowed, e.g. #EasterSunday, #theLordisrisen. Parish / Youth Ministry personnel are not permitted to direct message or accept/send friend requests to young people / vulnerable adults from their own personal Facebook account unless the person is known to them personally outside of their role with the Diocese of Killaloe.

## 2.3 Instagram

Any Instagram account must only be used by the Parish / Youth Ministry. Photos uploaded onto the Instagram must be in line with the ethos and guiding principles of the Diocese of Killaloe. It is not to be utilised to showcase the Parish / Youth Ministry personnel's own interests. All photos uploaded to Instagram must be saved in a folder on the computer hard drive. All uploads must be appropriate. The Instagram account is not to be utilised after 11pm.

Young people/ vulnerable adults are free to 'follow' any Parishes / Youth Ministry on Instagram however Parishes / Youth Ministry cannot 'follow' any young person/ vulnerable adult back. The accounts the Diocese of Killaloe Youth Ministry are allowed to 'follow' must be organisations or official Instagram accounts e.g. Net Ministries.

Replying to comments on Instagram should be restricted. Parish / Youth Ministry personnel may reply to a comment on the relevant Instagram post only if it is a query about an event. Replying to general comments is not allowed. Any replies in the comments section must not contain Emoji's as these may be misinterpreted by parents, guardians or other young people. Appropriate 'hash tags' are allowed, e.g. #Christmas. Employees are not permitted to 'follow' young people / vulnerable adults from their own personal Instagram account unless they are known personally to the employee outside of the Diocese of Killaloe / Youth Ministry, or before they began their term of employment with the Diocese of Killaloe.

## 2.4 Snapchat

The use of Snapchat by any Diocesan Group/Parish/Youth Ministry Group. Snapchat is a picture and video sharing app with an ephemeral nature. This means that the pictures/videos taken and shared are only viewable for up to 10 seconds before they disappear from the recipient's phone – images and messages cannot be saved on the app. Because of its nature it is impossible to safeguard the use of Snapchat, hence the decision to implement a no use policy in relation to this social media app.

## 2.5 WhatsApp

**\* Age Requirement.** To use WhatsApp, you must be at least 16 years old

WhatsApp can be a great tool for creating group messages between young people however when doing this make sure you have sought written parental permission first.

If the youth group is made up of both over and under 18's – a separate WhatsApp chat group should be set up for both age groups.

At least 2 adults (who have been Garda vetted) must be part of a WhatsApp group chat. Only vetted leaders can be part of a group with u18's.

As a young person leaves the youth group, they should immediately be deleted off the group WhatsApp chat.

When using WhatsApp group chats you should be aware that adding people to the group discloses their mobile number to the rest of the group.

WhatsApp allows you to back up your chats, as a leader we stress that you do this.

## 2.6 Tiktok

Any TikTok account must only be used by the Parish / Youth Ministry.

Videos

uploaded onto the TikTok must be in line with the ethos and guiding principles of the

Diocese of Killaloe. It is not to be utilised to showcase the Parish / Youth Ministry

personnel's own interests. All videos uploaded to TikTok must be saved in a folder on

the computer hard drive. All uploads must be appropriate. The TikTok account is not

to be utilised after 11pm.

Young people are free to 'follow' any Parishes / Youth Ministry on TikTok, however

Parishes / Youth Ministry cannot 'follow' any young person / vulnerable adult back.

The accounts the Diocese of Killaloe Youth Ministry are allowed to 'follow' must be

organisations or official TikTok accounts e.g. Net Ministries or another parish in the diocese.

Replying to comments on TikTok should be restricted. Parish / Youth Ministry personnel may reply to a comment on the relevant TikTok post only if it is a query about an event. Replying to general comments is not allowed. Any replies in the comments section must not contain Emoji's as these may be misinterpreted. Appropriate 'hash tags' are allowed, e.g. #Christmas. Employees are not permitted to 'follow' young people / vulnerable adults from their own personal account unless they are known personally to the employee outside of the Diocese of Killaloe / Youth Ministry , or before they began their term of employment with the Diocese of Killaloe.

### 3.0 General Guidelines

Be responsible. When in doubt about the content or tone of a post, leave it out. Although the style of social media text is informal, text should avoid sounding immature or unprofessional.

Be aware of privacy settings. Monitor postings regularly and remove posts that do not abide by site policy or Diocesan standards. Do not allow any obscene, harassing, offensive, derogatory or defamatory comments and images which reflect/discredit or cause embarrassment to the Diocese, its employees/volunteers, affiliates, schools and others on any site.

There must be at least two site administrators for each site/social media app to allow for rapid response and continuous monitoring and updating. Always comply with copyright laws and requirements when posting anything on Diocesan social media accounts.

It is recommended that the "no tagging" option be set on any and all social media (or identified by name in a photograph). Visitor's options should be limited to commenting only and not posting of pictures or videos.

While anyone is free to create and maintain personal websites and social media content, employees of the Diocese of Killaloe should be mindful that even personal sites must reflect Catholic and Diocesan values.