

# Beeston Methodist Church

## Guidelines for the use of e-mail and text messaging

*As the people of the Methodist Church we are concerned with the wholeness of each individual within God's purpose for everyone. We seek to safeguard all members of the church community of all ages. It is the responsibility of each one of us to prevent the physical, sexual or emotional abuse of children, young people and vulnerable adults.*

As technology progresses, so must our vigilance in protecting against its abuse. Text messaging and e-mail are increasingly the way that people communicate with each other, especially with young people. While offering a wealth of possibility, the darker side offers those with intent on harming children, new ways to abuse them.

Most importantly, "communication and common sense" are the two key elements to these guidelines and the primary aim is to protect the individual and work to ensure they are aware of their rights and empowered to exercise them, while still offering the freedom to communicate with each other.

Text messaging and e-mail are cheap and direct forms of communication and are the preferred form of communication for many people.

### **When text messaging or e-mailing:**

- Ensure that the content of the message is appropriate for the person to receive and should not contain offensive, abusive or inappropriate language.
- Be careful that communications cannot be misinterpreted.
- Anything we text/e-mail to a young person under 18 should be copied to parents/guardians. Wherever possible, text/e-mail to a group rather than an individual, including the young person's parents/guardians in the group. All messages should include a member of the safeguarding team. Only designated leaders should be sending out text/e-mail messages and parents/guardians should be informed who the designated people are for each group. The content of the message should relate solely to the activity of the group.
- When sending e-mails to a group, use the blind (BCC) option in order to avoid sharing addresses without permission.
- Do not share photographs or videos of children, young people or vulnerable adults via mobile phones or e-mail without permission. Refer to photography guidelines.
- Mobile phone numbers and e-mail addresses should not be shared with anyone without the permission of the individual or their parent/guardian if they are under 18.

If in any doubt don't do it. Any queries should be addressed to Beeston Methodist Church Safeguarding Officer email: [safeguarding@beestonmethodist.church](mailto:safeguarding@beestonmethodist.church).