PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES

with **E-Safety**

Alpha

E-safety & Security

If you are running Alpha or Alpha for Youth online, please take all the necessary steps to ensure you as the church or ministry are Online/E-Safety aware and competent.

It is necessary to be aware that those who wish to abuse young people, in particular, often start with electronic communications and then attempt to lure people into an unprotected face to face meeting.

With an increasing number of Alphas being run online through platforms like Zoom, Facebook and Instagram there is a need to address the use of videos and other online platforms. We know these forms of communication are difficult to monitor, which means that we encourage hosts to work in trusted pairs with support from helpers.

If using Zoom or other online platforms-please be aware of these issues and use safety measures as you can-such as password protecting your meetings, using secure wi-fi, being conscious of your surroundings and what can be seen on your video screens, and please always ensure the sessions are not recorded.

Dangers in this area include cyber bullying and online grooming. These are both very serious and should be treated with utmost caution and care by hosts and helpers.

Protection of Vulnerable Peoples

E-Safety is the collective term for safeguarding (protecting vulnerable individuals) involving the use of mobile phones, computers (including laptops, netbooks, tablets) and other electronic devices including games consoles, to communicate and access the internet, emails, text messages, instant messaging, social networking sites and other social media.

Maintain a Safe Environment

Do's We Recommend

- ✓ 'Think before you post': once the information is online it can be difficult, if not impossible, to remove

- ✓ When signing off messages, use a friendly but not over-familiar or personal tone

- ✓ Keep video calls, texting and messaging to appropriate times of day

- ✓ For Alpha hosts: Use a leadership style which will suit the needs of the whole group and remember to model the good practice in your own online behaviour.

- ✓ Encourage safe and healthy use of social media, and have appropriate privacy settings in place.

✓ Communicate clearly and unambiguously, and use social media for information rather than conversation (for example: for group reminders).

✓ Communicate and behave with respect online as if you are communicating or meeting offline and/or in person.

✓ Share only what you feel comfortable to share while respecting others and do not allow yourself to be pressured into doing or sharing anything you do not want to do/share anything they don't want to share. If you feel uncomfortable about any communication or behaviour, whether it be online or offline, contact your safeguarding or protection for vulnerable lead person at your church, school, or organization.

Don'ts We Recommend

✕ Promise confidentiality you can't guarantee.

✕ Allow your Alpha courses to be recorded.

✕ Encourage or foster exclusivity in communications either wittingly or unwittingly.

✕ Video call alone with a young or vulnerable person.

✕ Write or post anything that you wouldn't be happy for others to read.

✕ Share contact details without permission.

✕ Add people who are not in your direct pastoral remit – keep social media contact to those within the Alpha group.

×   Post photos of people without asking them first.

×   Post photos of young people whose parents have stated that they don't want images of their child being used (or if they've not agreed themselves too).

×   Tag people, unless they've given you permission. This is their choice not yours.

×   Get into deep and meaningful chats online or by text – keep online chats to a minimum and arrange a catch up.

×   For Alpha hosts: Follow young people back on snapchat or private message or share your story personally with young people.

Areas of Concern and Actions to Take

Matters for concern may include:

✓   What has been said by a person suggests they are in danger or at risk (NB – you need to take immediate action – see "What to do" below).

✓   The content of messages/e-mails suggest some form of abuse (NB – you need to report your concerns as soon as possible, within 24 hours at the latest).

✓   You are concerned by the mental well-being of a person (again, act quickly)

✓   The content of what a person has said online or by text seems inappropriate.

- ✓ Inappropriate images have been shared.

- ✓ A person has become too dependent on you through frequent and extended online, text or face-to-face contact.

- ✓ A young people is hiding their emails or texts (could be an indication of online grooming).

- ✓ A young person is being contacted by unknown adults or receiving gifts from people they don't know (could be an indication of online grooming).

What to do when concerned:

- ✓ DO NOT CLOSE DOWN THE CONVERSATION. This will potentially lose evidence – Screen shot where possible, and save any conversations eg copy and paste if necessary with date/s.

- ✓ Inform your church leader, Alpha course leader or your named safeguarding / protection of vulnerable people lead person as soon as possible.

- ✓ If you believe a person to be in danger or at risk, call the appropriate emergency number. In Hong Kong, that would be 999. If you are not sure, seek online advice. In Hong Kong, you could try the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer website.
  https://www.infosec.gov.hk/en/best-practices/person/safe-online-social-networking