



Safe Online Communication Policy for DBC Staff & Volunteers

Background:

DBC staff & volunteers utilise many different methods of communication in their roles within the church. This policy provides guidelines in relation to online communication, as well as procedures that must be followed. The purpose of this policy is to protect vulnerable user groups as well as DBC staff & volunteers.

Application and Extent

Online communication refers to the use of any method to access the internet and to communicate with others. This policy applies to any online communication between (1) a DBC staff member and/or a DBC volunteer and (2) any vulnerable person (unless they are family relations). A “Vulnerable Person” is any child under the age of 18 or a protected adult as defined by the Scottish Government PVG scheme (details of which can be found here: www.mygov.scot/pvg-scheme).

This policy also applies to any DBC social media group or communications group which is **public**, regardless of whether it contains any Vulnerable Persons or not. For the avoidance of doubt, this includes websites.

General Guidelines

Note: These General Guidelines are not compulsory, however, persistent failure to adhere to the principles behind these General Guidelines may result in sanction (see below).

1. It is important to maintain good and open relationships with the parents and/or carers of any Vulnerable Person regarding online communication with the Vulnerable Person.
2. Always use an appropriate tone: friendly, but not over-familiar or personal.
3. Be warm and friendly, but do not suggest or offer a special relationship.
4. Be clear in your communication: avoid abbreviating or cutting short your communications.
5. Be conscious in your communications with any Vulnerable Person to avoid any possible misinterpretation of your motives or behaviour.
6. Respect each person's right to confidentiality unless abuse/harm is suspected or disclosed.
7. DBC would prefer that as far as possible, only equipment provided by DBC is used to communicate.
8. Images and videos should not be altered to skew the diversity of age, ethnicity, and/or gender of any group or activity.
9. Wherever possible only communicate during sociable hours. Consider familiarising yourself with send/post later functions to help facilitate this. Also consider your intended audience and what they might be otherwise doing (*for example, sending a message to a youth group*

at 11am on a School Day may encourage use of social media at school, which we do not want).

10. It is important to remember that as a DBC volunteer or staff member that anything you post online whether in a personal capacity or a volunteer/work capacity, may reflect on DBC.
11. To build on point 9 above, all DBC volunteers and staff should review and monitor their social media security settings to have regard for who can see what (*for example, if a Vulnerable Person follows your Instagram account, be aware that not all posts may be appropriate for them to view*).
12. Be purposeful in your communication in pointing to Christ. Remember Ephesians 4:29 – “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

Policies & Procedures

*Note: These Policies & Procedures **must** be followed. Failure to do so may result in sanction (see below).*

1. Relating to Social Media

- a. If a DBC volunteer or staff member becomes aware that any child under the age of 13 has a social media presence, this must be reported to either the DBC Safeguarding Co-ordinator or the DBC Youth Leader(s).
- b. No DBC volunteer or staff member may “follow”, “friend”, or otherwise engage in any online social media with any child under the age of 13.

2. Relating to DBC Social Media Groups

- a. Any social media group (“SMG”) or communication group that includes any Vulnerable Person must be administered (or similar) by at least 2 DBC staff or volunteers. This must include permissions to fully monitor all group activity.
- b. Any social media group or communication group that is linked to DBC and is **public** (“PSMG”) must be administered (or similar) by at least 2 DBC staff or volunteers.
- c. Any PSMG must highlight DBC’s name and/or logo in its information and DBC’s name and/or logo must be visible on every post or communication made by the PSMG.
- d. Any post, comment, or other communication made by an SMG publicly or to any other private Social Media Group must make DBC’s name and/or logo visible.
- e. Any comment, post, or other communication on an SMG must only be deleted on the agreement of at least 2 DBC staff or volunteers. A record of this deletion and the reasons for this must be kept.
- f. All SMG’s and PSMG’s must seek to verify that participants (or “followers”, “members”, etc) are over the age of 12. If not, this must be reported to the DBC Safeguarding Co-ordinator or the DBC Youth Leader(s).
- g. All SMG’s must provide links to the relevant statutory authority (such as Child Exploitation & Online Protection) through which a Vulnerable Person may report online abuse.

3. Relating to Photographic Images or Video

- a. Live streaming of events must be clearly advertised in advance and where any Vulnerable Person is involved, appropriate permission must be sought from their Parent/Guardian.
- b. No photograph or video of any Vulnerable Person may be taken unless permission has been received.

- c. The leader(s) of any DBC group which includes Vulnerable Persons should maintain a list of persons for whom permission has been given.
- d. Any DBC volunteer or staff member must, before sharing, sending, requesting, or otherwise displaying any content containing an image or video of any Vulnerable Person, ensure that the relevant permission has been given.
- e. Any DBC volunteer or staff member must remove/delete any image or video if consent is subsequently withdrawn.

4. Relating to all Online Communication

- a. No DBC volunteer or staff member may communicate directly (i.e. privately/individually) with any child under the age of 13 online. Any email sent to a group where some group members are under 13 years, if the group members are included as BCC for privacy reasons, then the email must include at least one other DBC volunteer or staff member in the visible distribution list.
- b. All written online communications with any Vulnerable Person must not be deleted. If requested by the DBC Safeguarding Co-ordinator or the DBC Youth Leader(s), copies of all correspondence between a DBC volunteer or staff member and any Vulnerable Person must be provided.
- c. DBC practices “two-deep leadership”. Therefore, one-on-one video/visual communication between a DBC volunteer or staff member and any Vulnerable Person is strictly prohibited. All video/visual communication with a single Vulnerable Person must include either the parent/guardian of the Vulnerable Person, or at least two DBC volunteers and/or staff members.
 - i. *Note: Should any Vulnerable Person seek to initiate a video/visual communication, this should not be accepted unless at least two DBC volunteers and/or staff members are present, or you have confirmed in writing with the Vulnerable Person that their parent/guardian is also present.*
- d. No DBC volunteer or staff member may privately communicate (using any method) with any Vulnerable Person of the opposite sex.
- e. Any private written online communication between a DBC volunteer or staff member and any Vulnerable Person must be registered with the nominated register keeper (usually the Youth Leader) within 7 days of beginning.
 - i. *Note: This does not apply to each message. For example, if AB (a male DBC Volunteer) was “Facebook Friends” with XY (a 15-year-old male youth church attendee), this “Facebook Friendship” would already be registered. If a private message was sent/received, the fact of this conversation occurring would also have to be registered.*
- f. Do not share personal information or request/respond to any personal information from a Vulnerable Person other than that which might be appropriate as part of your role.
- g. The full name of any Vulnerable Person must not be used in any public communication unless specific consent is received from the Vulnerable Person’s parent/guardian.
- h. DBC volunteers and staff members must not share, send, request, or otherwise display offensive messages or pictures.
- i. DBC volunteers and staff members must not share, send, request, or otherwise display pornographic, racist, or hate motivated content.
- j. DBC volunteers and staff members must not infringe copyright restrictions when sharing, sending, requesting, or otherwise displaying any content.
- k. DBC volunteers and staff members must not harass, insult, or bully in their online

communications.

Any safeguarding concerns/allegations must be referred to the DBC Safeguarding Co-ordinator.

Sanctions

Any breach of the above Guidelines or Policies & Procedures may result in:

1. A temporary or permanent ban on online communication as covered by this document.
2. A temporary or permanent removal from office as either a DBC volunteer or staff member.
3. Any additional disciplinary action in line with existing practice.
4. Referral to the police or relevant local authorities.

As a DBC volunteer or staff member, I declare that I have read and understood the DBC Safe Online Communication Policy and agree to be subject to the Guidelines and Policies & Procedures outlined above.

Name (Signed): _____

Name (Printed): _____

Date: _____

Note: A copy of this policy will be posted online.

DBC Safeguarding Co-ordinator: Jean Muir
1st September 2020

Approved by the Deacons: 30th September 2020