YPD Internet and social media guidelines.

Social media is defined in this document as any technology that is used to communicate a message, e.g. websites, mobile phones and such things as CD-ROMs. DVD's, cloud technologies etc.

A conversation in this context can be an exchange of social media message, emails or text messages.

What are young people doing on online social networks?
Over 60% of young people have social media profiles, and research by MSN/MTV suggests that only 18% of young people have yet to explore social media. The Institute of Public Policy Research have found many young people spending upwards of two hours a night on social media. So what are young people spending all their time doing on sites like Facebook, Bebo and MySpace? The following information taken from the National Youth Agency paper Youth Work and Social Network (2008:11). *[Davis, T. and Cranston, P (2008) 'Youth Work and Social Networking', National Youth Agency. Available from http://www.nya.org.uk/catalogue/youth-policy/youth-work-and-social-networking]*

Young people are:
- **Keeping in touch.** Young people today are part of a 'constantly connected' generation – where conversations can start at school or in a youth club, move to mobile phones, and then move onto social networking sites. Being in contact is what matters.
- **Developing new contacts.** Young people can find new contacts on social through exploring the friends lists of their existing contacts, searching for people and groups with particular shared interests, or by browsing the site.
- **Sharing content and engaging in self-expression.** Social media provides a space for young people to create and share media – ranging from written blog posts, photos and videos, through to edited works and collaborative creations. Much of this creative content is what might be seen as traditional teenage self-expression moved online.
- **Exploring identity.** Social media provides a space for young people to explore and develop their identity – both through reflecting on how they should present themselves on their own profiles on a site and through inviting and receiving feedback from peers through comments and other contributions.
- **Hanging out and consuming content.** Most forms of social media are commercial, media-rich spaces and some of the time young people spend on these sites may be seen as time spent just 'hanging out' and being consumers of the information, music, videos, photos and games hosted within them.
- **Accessing information and informal learning.** Through browsing social network profiles young people can access a wide range of information. There is also significant interest in the potential of online social networks as spaces for young people's informal learning outside school.

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1) 'Making disciples of all nations' – a simple reflection.
In considering the church's invitation to 'make disciples of all nations' it is important to reflect on some points with regards to social media.

- The word used for 'nations' in the NIV is *ethnos* meaning 'tribe', 'people group' or 'community'. Our call to make disciples is a holistic one, which encompasses not just countries but people groups. Social media is not only an ethnos in its own right but also a meeting of different ethnos' together. If we seek to use social media we would do well to recognise it as a tool to building relationships and fulfilling our great commission.
- Paul notes in 1 Corinthians 9:22 that he becomes 'all things to all people.' In our mission to bring the gospel to young people we recognise the need to sometimes 'speak a language' that is understood by young people. Social media is such a language. It may be something we are not fluent in, but it is effective as a tool to become all things to all people.
- We therefore recognise another biblical virtue; the need for integrity. In our dealings with social media we recognise it can be used for good and for evil. As disciples of Jesus, seeking to make new disciples, we aim to use social media in a way that honours the God we worship and affirms the values and principles of the Kingdom of God. Such principles include accountability, integrity, honesty, kindness and self-control.

2) What needs to be included in any information we provide?

- We need to be transparent in all our information. Every website we create or have influence over needs to have a section clearly labelled as a reference to our Safe From Harm Policy. This section will spell out what our policy is and what our working practices are.
- All our sites will have the YPD logo clearly visible which links to the WRU site.

3) Best Practices of those using Social Media.

- Everyone involved in using social media will have read and understood the Safe From Harm Policy or relevant church policy.
- Under no circumstances are personal details to be exchanged in a public forum. If someone posts personal details in a public forum then the post must be deleted or modified to remove the details, a note explaining this will then be posted.
- No meetings are to be arranged. This is a rule that can only be broken if the meeting is supervised in a public place. The Minister or line manager of a worker must be informed of the meeting and approve of it. The parents or guardians should also be informed.
- As a general guideline, YPD workers and volunteers should avoid texting young people at all. If at all possible a record of any sms, mms or email conversations should be kept and archived.

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- Anyone working with young people or children should be aware of the positive and negative aspects of using social media, such as Facebook. Online social media can be a powerful tool in children's and youth work but it also has its risks. Generally, it is better to have a church / club Facebook page rather than allowing young people access to personal profiles. This means that online communication through social media sites can be safe and fully accountable.
- YPD workers and volunteers should use their real names for chat purposes.
- No conversation is to be entered into that involves sexual or pornographic websites, if they do come up in conversation either ignore the comment or terminate the conversation immediately, unless you feel the young person is vulnerable or 'at risk'.
- Any photographs used on our websites will be such that no young people will be identifiable. Any photographs will be vetted to make sure they are acceptable. Images of young people participating in any sporting activity have the potential for greater abuse by paedophiles wishing to manipulate the digital image and create pornographic material, with this in mind any images we put on our websites will be such that the possibility of manipulating it will be minimal.
- Above all the over-riding attitude is a concern for the people we are working with, for their well-being and salvation. As long as we are working for their good then what we do and how we approach our work will dictate our working practices for the good.

4) Positive use of social media

Social media is a powerful tool that can be used to build relationships and affirm biblical values. The National Youth Agency (www.nya.org.uk) suggest the foundations of effective engagement through social media do exist and could be developed through four lines of activity:

1. Survey –identify current access to social media, engagement with online social networking and skills and resources to draw upon within the young people.

2. Safety –consider the safety implications of online social networking for young people and for staff, and examine options for policy and action in supporting young people in navigating risk, both individually and as groups.

3. Skills –take active steps to develop the online social networking knowledge and skills of staff.

4. Strategy –explore opportunities to use online social networking as a youth work tool, and to support and encourage young people to take up the positive opportunities it provides.

Taken from Davis, T. and Cranston, P (2008) 'Youth Work and Social Networking', National Youth Agency. Available from http://www.nya.org.uk/catalogue/youth-policy/youth-work-and-social-networking

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These four steps are integral to the positive use of social media. We therefore would recommend a church or youth group considers these points when setting up or reviewing social media usage.

Filter protocol.

How do we know what is or is not appropriate when we are engaging in social media? The code and table below seeks to offer a framework in which practitioners can gauge the appropriate level of posts, inputs, mails and data on social media.

Code Red content will be filtered or removed from all social media and will not warrant public responses. Red content may require further investigation by the social media administrator. This content includes:
• Copyright violations
• Critical information
• Hateful, violent, or stigmatizing content
• Impersonation
• Private, confidential, or personally identifiable information
• Political statements against the spirit or values of the church or youth group
• Pornography or obscenity
• Spam/malicious code
• Unsupported accusations

Code Orange content will not be posted if the social media administrator feels it would be inappropriate to do so. Content may be edited / cut / deleted to comply with the spirit of the social media. This content includes:
• Misinformation: Content that is clearly inaccurate based on the church / youth group policies and other authoritative sources.
• Emotional Statements: Comments/posts with a tone or language that suggests intense emotional response to the topic that may offend or contradict the values of the sponsoring church / youth group
These comments should be filtered and responded to directly if possible.

Code Yellow content may be filtered on social media but does not warrant removal. The social media administrator should respond appropriately. This content includes;
• Individual requests
• Media inquiries
• Off topic comments

Code Green content involves neutral or benign statements that are generally accurate and do not indicate the desire for a response. All is good in the hood.