

BB Safeguarding Workshop

Online technology

Aim: To review BB safeguarding practice in the light of social networking sites and online technology.

Timing: Workshop to last 45 minutes (or 30 minutes as part of the YLT module “Child Protection and Safety”)

Resources: Youthlink Handout
BB Safety Handbook section on social networking

Welcome the group and introduce the topic by referring to the aim. Say a bit about how online technology can be used in positive ways to promote BB and for young people to organise themselves. However, we need to be very clear about the boundaries between leaders and young people. This workshop is aimed at enabling leaders to feel confident about boundaries and to clarify BB guidance on social networking sites etc.

Boundaries. Say that being in rapport with young people means that a leader needs to understand his/her boundaries. Ask the group to define what we mean by boundaries, and write good definitions onto a flip chart. Examples of where boundaries are not clear or respected should also be discussed.

Ask why we have boundaries. We are looking for understanding of:

- Young people may be vulnerable and boundaries help to protect them
- The youth work relationship is not the same as a normal reciprocal friendship
- Boundaries “contain” the youth work relationship to protect yp and leaders from getting into situations that are inappropriate and difficult to manage.

Think of behaviours that could be inappropriate, list onto flip chart

- One-to-one social meetings in pubs/restaurants/leader’s home (any exceptions to this rule?)
- Swearing?
- Inappropriate jokes?
- Borrowing or lending money?
- Acting on behalf of a young person in a different setting?
School/police/probation/shops/health issues
- Others from groups’ own experiences
- Facebook, MSN, social networking etc

(NB It is important not to be judgemental but allow a free discussion)

Also talk about confidentiality – what are the boundaries around having “secrets” with yp?

Issue the handout on SNS and explain that the document outlines good practice and although not a BB publication, was used in formulating our own advice to leaders

which can be found in the Safety Handbook. *(Note to Trainer: it would be helpful to have a copy of the advice from the Safety Handbook and read it out to the group.)*

With regard to leaders **texting** young people – this should only be to communicate factual information regarding BB and ideally, any texts sent to young people should also be sent to the parent/carer.

Draw attention to the guidance that specifies that adults in positions of trust (teachers, youth workers, ministers etc) should not be online with young people outside of the normal meeting times and place of BB.

Ask the group **why** they think that this policy is now accepted practice across most schools and youth work organisations. You are looking for feedback that stresses that online chat or messaging is **unsupervised** and that parents may not be aware that their children are chatting to adults on their computers. Explain that the BB has had many complaints from parents about this – the majority of the leaders who were chatting online had no bad intent – but have moved outside of the boundaries of their BB work and risked investigations and bad publicity. Unfortunately we have also had a few cases where there has been intent to develop inappropriate relationships and the police have been involved.

Trainers – at this point you can give your own examples, if you have them, of how leaders have come “unstuck” by becoming involved in situations that are difficult to manage etc.

Reassure the group that it is understood that many leaders who have Facebook pages have young people who attend BB as “friends”. We are aware that while the vast majority of these leaders are not under suspicion we must get the message out to them that they should remove these young people from their pages (and explain to the yp why this is being done and why it is BB policy).

Alternatives are to have BB Company Facebook pages where young people can join and discuss things amongst themselves. Even these should be monitored by leaders to ensure that no inappropriate activity (eg bullying) is taking place.

Ask the group members how many of them have discussed this topic with BB staff or with the Church. Get feedback on how the good practice guidance has been applied locally.

Allow any questions or discussion before recapping on the main points:

- Importance of boundaries
- Risks to young people of engaging in one-to-one online relationships
- Risks to leaders in getting into situations that are difficult to manage
- Good practice guidance and how to communicate locally.

Thank the group and close.