SAFER ONLINE SPACES

Good Practice Guidelines of Focolare Movement in Ireland

INTRODUCTION

As a result of Government advice and guidance concerning COVID-19, the Focolare Movement is responding in numerous ways and continues to work with children and youth during these exceptional times. As our Gen Assistants and Youth Leaders are increasing the use of digital technology, the Focolare Movement in Ireland has put together these Good Practice Guidelines to assist in creating safer online spaces.

It is important to be aware of the risks and challenges, as well as the opportunities, that these times present.

The Focolare Movement is committed to the promotion of the well-being and protection of children and youth, and has a zero-tolerance approach to any form of abuse of children or youth.

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Co-directors

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Before a meeting

Consider your attire
Wear what you would have worn to a meeting had you attended in person.

Consider your location
Engage in online forums from public areas of your house, eg dining room, living room, office. Also check the backdrop which should be free of anything you would not have on your walls at a public meeting.

Consider your platform
Limit your contact with children under 18 to public platforms such as Zoom, Google Hangouts, etc Direct private connections are discouraged.

Consider how online meetings are scheduled
Arrange online meetings in advance through a group forum and with the knowledge and permission of parents or carers.

Consider who has access to your meetings
Arrange to host meetings – always providing parents with link to the meetings, emails, advertising, messages, etc.

Consider technical issues

For bigger meetings technical backup will be required to silence microphones, to monitor comments, or to "eject" any person behaving badly.

The meeting should be closed by the host adult, checking that all children have safely left the meeting before it is closed down.

To prevent hacking, the Zoom link should not be sent out too far in advance.

Vetting

If the role required Vetting before Covid-19, this still applies if you are engaging in online with young people.

Training

A worker should not engage in any youth work practice online if they are not appropriately trained in line with the requirements of the Focolare Movement.

Private chats online

Communicating one-on-one online is the equivalent of meeting a young person in a room one-on-one. Let another youth leader and a parent know about the meeting, including start and finish time. Leave a door open.

Permission and Consent

New parent/guardian consent forms will shortly be in place for 2020-2021 and will include online consent form, and will clarify exactly what online interactions are taking place.

Adult:Child Ratio

Meetings should always be co- hosted. Adults should not be alone online with the children, except for private chats as above.

Record Keeping

Translate the key principles of our existing record keeping requirements to these new working arrangements, wherever possible. Particularly with any child protection concerns, these will need to be recorded accurately and securely.

Code of Conduct

Our Code of Conduct for young people should be translated into what they would look like when participating in online groups and all online interactions. Respect, inclusion, kindness, arriving on time, etc are just as important online as at meetings.

Digital Age of Consent

Under GDPR, the Digital Age of Consent is 16 years old in Ireland and is designed to protect personal information of children under 16. If new services or platforms are being introduced to our young people and they are being asked to sign up for that service, children's personal information should not be divulged by them. Parental assistance is therefore required.

APPENDIX 1

Checklist

1. Are the platforms I am encouraging youth to use Age Appropriate?

2. For those under 16 years, have I asked youth to discuss the platform/s with parents and seek parental permission?

3. For those under 16 years, have I provided parents with updated information guides on the platform's we are using with youth, so they can understand the associated benefits and risks?

Common Sense Media https://www.commonsensemedia.org/ and National Online Safety UK https://nationalonlinesafety.com/guides offer up-to-date guides and advice regarding current popular Apps.

4. Have I informed youth of the privacy settings of the platforms I am encouraging them to use?

5. Have I set clear guidelines on what is acceptable / unacceptable to share on the platforms we are using?

6. Am I connecting youth through a platform who would not have been in contact previously (e.g. the creation of a group where all members now have access to contact details of all other members)? If so, have I gained consent for their personal information to be shared in this way?

APPENDIX 2

Digital well-being

- Be mindful when requesting youth to join group video chats or share video content from their home. Some youth may feel uncomfortable sharing their home environment. Other family members, personal information etc. may also be visible. Certain platforms enable users to use generic backgrounds when sharing video content. Encourage youth to choose this option where possible and/or provide alternative means of connecting for youth who are uncomfortable with group video chats or sharing video content.

- Remind youth to activate Two-Step Verification/Two-Factor Authentication for all accounts (where available). This is an extra layer of security for their account, requiring a code in addition to a password to access their account. Remember to print off the back up codes when setting this up.

    1. Two Step Verification WhatsApp https://faq.whatsapp.com/26000021

    2. Two Factor Authentication
       Instagram https://help.instagram.com/566810106808145

    3. Two Factor Authentication Snapchat https://support.snapchat.com/en-US/article/enable-login-verification

- Update all apps as required to benefit from the latest security and privacy options.

- Digital wellbeing features are also available for many popular Apps, allowing users to control how much time they spend on that App, see their daily activity, turn off notifications and set reminders to take a break. Encourage youth to look after their mental health online by accessing the platforms wellbeing features (where available).

    1. Digital Wellbeing TikTok https://www.tiktok.com/safety/resources/digital-wellbeing?lang=en

    2. Instagram Wellbeing https://wellbeing.instagram.com/digital%20

    3. Snapchat Here for You Tool https://support.snapchat.com/en-US/news/safety-first-news