

Use of Google Hangouts as communication between Youth Workers and Young People and Families

In order to facilitate effective and safe communication between the Youth Workers and young people and family, the Google Hangouts platform will be used. It is an app that many families and young people themselves may have pre-installed on devices but have perhaps never used. It is readily available from app stores or a browser version can be used.

What is Google Hangouts?

It is a messaging platform much like others such as WhatsApp. It has a couple of key differences though:

- It works off email addresses not phone numbers, making the process safer and more accountable.
- It's minimum age for use is lower than WhatsApp, meaning we can recommend it for any of our young people.

How do we use it?

- Log into the app using a google/gmail address (one can be made just for this use). A single app can be used and changed between multiple log ins at ease.
- There will be two group chats; a parents' chat and a youth chat that participants can be invited to join.
- Alternatively, an email address can be added as a 'contact' but not actually added to the chat(s).
- Participants within the chat will be able to see the contacts of others within the chat and be able to message them too.
- Youth Workers can also message individual group members to support or to arrange specific projects etc.

Why are we doing this?

This is not an attempt to side-line parents/guardians from communication. Email updates will continue as they have done. Until now, the safest way to communicate has been to email parents/guardians. However, this process is not engaging for young people themselves, nor does it help grow relationships. Other methods such as phones etc are not easy to use within the proper safeguarding manner.

Safeguarding

- The only adults in the Youth chat will be two Youth Workers (at the time of writing, Rob & Jay). They will share a single account so that both will see any messages sent to or from either of them.
- This Youth Worker account will also be routinely monitored by a person designated by the PCC.
- Participants in the Youth chat agree to the Code of Conduct below and can be removed from the group if necessary.

What do we do?

- Create Google account(s) if necessary
- Complete this form which will send the requested accounts to be added to the groups.
- You will then be sent a joining link via email to join the requested groups.

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Code of Conduct:

Most of this is common sense and would be done without thinking anyway so it is expressed below in terms of principles:

- Do respect people's privacy and think before you message.
- Post appropriate content only. Offensive material will result in group closure.
- Do not share the group joining link with others, these must only be sent by admins.

Parental Consent

I consent to my child(ren) joining the Youth Google Hangouts group chat and being contacted by Youth Workers as appropriate. If you do not consent to this, please consider joining the parent group so that you can be contacted directly and with ease on your child's behalf.

Parent name:

Name(s) of child(ren):

Relationship to child:

Date:

Google email addresses to be added to Youth chat on Hangouts:

Google email addresses to be added to Parent chat on Hangouts:

If not added to groups, Google email addresses to be added as contacts: