

Using an Online Communications Platform with Young People

“Zoom” Policy & Procedures
Reviewed 2026



Archdiocese of Cashel & Emly

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Safeguarding Guidelines for Parish / Diocesan use of Zoom with young people

- Diocesan policy around safeguarding applies in your online communications with children, young people, and vulnerable adults, as it does in a face-to-face setting.
- In Ireland under the Child Care Act 1991, the Children Act 2001 and the United Nation on the Rights of the Child, a child is defined as anyone under the age of 18.
- The digital age of consent in Ireland is 16 years.
- Zoom is not intended for use by individuals under the age of 16, unless it is through a school subscriber using Zoom for education, or for the purposes of Parish / Diocesan family and children's ministry.

Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry Zoom Accounts

- Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry should not use the free version of Zoom as it does not include the security measures that the subscription versions do. The Zoom subscription should be taken out by the parish / diocese and not by individuals.
- Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry personnel should not use a private Zoom account to contact young people.
- Young people should only access the Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry Zoom meeting through their Parent / Guardian's email.

Parental Consent

- Parental Consent is required to participate in Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry virtual programmes / events. Consent form available on the diocesan website: <https://cashel-emly.ie/safeguarding/forms-policies/>
- Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry leaders must use the specific Parental Consent form relating to Zoom.
- Links to Zoom Meetings (with Meeting ID / password) will be sent to the Parent / Guardian's email address.

Code of Conduct

- A specific Code of Conduct for Zoom meetings must be in place, devised by the young people participating in the event. A general outline of this is included in the consent form. This must be read and signed by both the young person and Parent / Guardian.
- At the beginning of each meeting, the Code of Conduct should be displayed so each young person is aware of it.
- Breaches of the Code of Conduct will result in the young person being removed from the meeting. Incidents should be recorded with as much detail as possible immediately after the meeting has ended and stored as per Diocesan GDPR requirements. Parents / guardians are to be informed of the breach and consequences.

Online Code of Conduct for Young People:

- **Be kind:** No judgmental attitudes or bullying. Negative, hurtful or derogatory comments will not be tolerated. The group should be a safe space for members to express themselves.
- **Respect others:** Respect the different opinions of everyone in the group and listen. Healthy debates are natural, but kindness is required. Keep discussions to discussion time. Follow the instructions of the leader(s).

- **Respect privacy:** No photo-taking, screenshots or screen recordings of meeting. Do not share group codes or passwords with people outside the group. Do not tag other people in photos or posts on social media without their permission.
- **Be honest:** Make a leader aware if you are feeling uncomfortable due to a person or topic being discussed. If you need a break do not be afraid to ask.
- **No self-promotions or spam:** Self-promotion, spam and irrelevant links aren't allowed.
- **Respect confidentiality and do not gossip:** if you are telling a story about someone, ask yourself, "Is this my story to tell?" Do not talk about other people without permission: this includes your family members. Always respect confidentiality: what is said in the group, stays in the group, unless there is a safeguarding concern.
- **Appropriate Dress Code and Surroundings:** Only use the online platform from an appropriate location i.e. bedrooms and bathrooms are not appropriate. Make sure people around you cannot be seen on camera unless they are part of this group. Dress appropriately e.g. pyjamas are not appropriate.
- **Breach of the Code:** Anyone who breaks the rules or acts inappropriately while on the online platform will be removed from the meeting.

Garda Vetting and Safeguarding training

- All Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry Leaders must be Garda Vetted and at least two Leaders must attend safeguarding training.

A Guide to Zoom Features and Requirements

Record Meeting / Screenshots

- Meetings on Zoom with young people are never to be recorded.
- Participants are not allowed to record or take screenshots. This is outlined in the Code of Conduct.
- Screenshots of the meeting can only be taken by hosts if the young people and their parents / guardians have given written consent. Participants' names must be blacked out if they can be identified in the photo.

Waiting Room

- When participants join a meeting, place them in a waiting room and require the Tech Host to admit them individually.
- Enabling the waiting room automatically disables the setting for allowing participants to join before host.
- Display a welcome message any disclaimers in the Waiting Room e.g. *"Meeting in Progress" / "Welcome to (insert meeting name / purpose) / The host will let you in soon"* and a reminder to participants to have their correct name displayed on screen.

Video / Camera

- Encourage participants to have their cameras on and their first names displayed.
- If a young person is not comfortable with having their camera on they can choose to turn it off.
- A clear method of verifying the identity of the young person in an online session is essential.

Microphones

- The Tech Host should mute all participants' microphones when they start the call.
- Ask participants to mute their microphone when not speaking (otherwise, with background noise it can get very distracting).
- There is the option of using the "Raise your hand" feature to talk next if there is a lot of people on the call.

Chat Feature

- The Chat Feature is a great tool for participants who may feel too shy to say something. It allows them to engage in conversation in a way that they will feel more comfortable with.
- The Tech Host has the responsibility for the Chat feature.
- The Tech Host should review the Chat directly after each Zoom meeting in order to make sure that no issue arose during the meeting.
- Zoom has two security features which should be used in Zoom meetings with young people:
 - Prevent participants from saving the chat.
 - Prevent participants from sending each other private chats. Young people can still communicate with the hosts through private chat if necessary.

Screen Share

- Screen Share is a great function for showing PowerPoints, videos etc.
- Zoom has the option to allow participants to share their screens. This option should be disabled at the start of the meeting.
- The only person that should be able to share their screen is the Tech Host and / or other youth ministry leaders designated to share their screen for the Zoom meeting.

Breakout Rooms

- Breakout rooms allow you to split your Zoom meeting into separate sessions for facilitating small group discussions.
- The Tech Host can choose to split the participants of the meeting into these separate sessions automatically or manually.
- The Tech Host can set a timer for the rooms. When the time is up, the breakout rooms automatically close and send all participants back into the main session. The Tech Host can also choose to close the breakout room early if needed.
- Two leaders are required for each breakout room. The two leaders are required to stay for the full duration of the breakout session.
- Tech Host and MC should remain in the main session at all times in cases where a participant drops off the call and tries to join again or accidentally leaves the breakout room.

Generic Backgrounds

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

are uncomfortable with group video chats or sharing video content. Young people and adult leaders should only use this online platform from a public part of the house i.e. not a bedroom or bathroom, mindful that other people who are not part of the ministry should not be visible on camera.

General Guidelines

Before Zoom meeting

- Risk assessments to be carried out prior to organising event for virtual meetings planned with young people. Instructions on risk assessments and the template is available on the diocesan website <https://cashel-emly.ie/safeguarding/forms-policies/>
- Youth Leaders will decide the purpose of the zoom meeting and the invitees, this will be recorded and kept on file.
- Only those invited by the Leaders will be allowed into the zoom meeting.
- Consent forms for any member must have been signed and returned to the Leader.
- Leaders send the zoom invitation by text / email via the parent / guardian for the meeting.
- Parents are to be informed of upcoming dates and times of when the virtual group will gather.
- Encourage parents to discuss online safety with their young person prior to session. <https://www.webwise.ie/parents/>. Parents should also be asked to review Zoom's Privacy terms and conditions carefully before registering.

Participants to be advised in advance how best to prepare for the Zoom Meeting:

- Charged laptop / phone with access to camera and microphone. (Laptops are needed to access the full features of Zoom. It is not recommended to use a phone for this reason, although it is possible to access Zoom on your phone.
- Recommend using a headset if available but it is not a necessity.
- Strong Wi-Fi connection (In the event of a weak Wi-Fi connection at home, contact your Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry leader to discuss alternative ways of participating in the Zoom Meeting.)
- Ensure your background is free from any personal images / items that can identify personal information e.g. where you live.
- Within the Zoom session with other participants please do not give out any personal information about yourself or your family members e.g. home address, email address or phone numbers, alternative social media profile information or personal images / videos.

During the Zoom meeting

- There are to be at least two leaders at every zoom meeting.
- Each member will sign in and enter the waiting room.

- The leaders will be on line and each potential member will be admitted to the meeting one at a time.
- Leaders will record the name of the person that appears on the screen.
- Members faces must be visible to the leaders.
- Members must be in a shared space in their homes with parents / guardians in vicinity.
- No calls to be from bedrooms.
- Appropriate dress code for leaders and young people.
- Uninvited guests will be blocked.
- All Leaders should remain in the meeting until all participants have left.
- Keep a log of Parish / Diocesan Youth Ministry Zoom meetings: Attendance record, time and date, duration of call. Also include a brief description of what was covered and if any issues arose. Record to be securely stored as per Diocesan GDPR policy and procedures.
- If a young person says something that causes concern and seems like it could lead to a safeguarding disclosure, follow the Diocesan Safeguarding Policy and Procedures available at <https://cashel-emly.ie/safeguarding/forms-policies/>
- If there is a safeguarding concern, contact the Diocesan Designated Liaison Person: 086 6362480. Full list of contact available on the diocesan website: <https://cashel-emly.ie/safeguarding/forms-policies/>
- These guidelines, policy and procedures will be reviewed regularly and updated in light of feedback and experience.