

# Use of Google Chat as communication between Youth Workers and Young People

In order to facilitate effective and safe communication between the Youth Workers and young people and family, the Google 'Chat' (previous '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 Chat?

It is a messaging platform much like others such as WhatsApp. It has a couple of key difference 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 use and change between multiple log in accounts at ease.
- There will be a group 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 (the email address associated with the log-in account) within the chat and be able to message them directly within the app only.
- 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 relationship. Other methods such as phones etc are not easy to use within the proper safeguarding manner. We anticipate that this will be largely used

## Safeguarding

- The only adults in the Youth chat will be Youth Workers (at the time of writing, Rob & Jay). They will share a single account so that they will see any messages sent to or from any of them.
- This Youth Worker account will also be routinely monitored by another person who can report issues to the Safeguarding Team.
- 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
- Select the appropriate consent box as part of the generic Youth Ministry consent process or contact [youth@allsaintsmarcham.org](mailto:youth@allsaintsmarcham.org) if you have already provided generic consent.
- You will then be sent a joining link via email to join the requested groups.
- Download Google 'Chat' app to device or use the browser version and log-in.

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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.