**WhatsApp Policy For Parents, Carers, Leaders and Helpers**

**Dated 01/09/2025**

1st Greyabbey Scouts provides fun and challenging experiences for young people in the Greyabbey area, in a safe and supportive environment. To keep on doing that we need to use Whatsapp for the running of our group. We use it to contact individuals through group chats and it allows us to effectively manage the Scout Group. This is the policy on the use of WhatsApp groups for the use of the Scout group.

**Introduction**

This policy sets out the rules and procedures for the use of WhatsApp channels operated by 1st Greyabbey Scout Group.

Note while this policy primarily relates to parent groups, on occasion leaders may use WhatsApp to communicate with young people (e.g. on expeditions, camps, or other events). In these cases, the same rules apply with additional safeguarding considerations (see our [Safeguarding Policy](https://www.17thnewcastle.org.uk/policy/safeguarding)).

[1. Purpose](https://www.17thnewcastle.org.uk/policy/whatsapp#_1-purpose)

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all communication on WhatsApp channels operated by the group is appropriate and in line with the values of Scouting.

1.2 This policy is intended to provide guidance to all leaders, trustees, parents, and carers on how to use WhatsApp channels operated by the group. This policy is also intended to provide guidance to young people on how to use WhatsApp channels operated by the group in a safe and responsible manner.

[2. Scope](https://www.17thnewcastle.org.uk/policy/whatsapp#_2-scope)

2.1 This policy applies to all WhatsApp groups operated by the group, including groups for parents, carers, and young people.

2.2 WhatsApp groups used by leaders for the purposes of planning and organising events are not within the scope of this policy.

2.3 This policy applies to all members of the group who are invited to join a WhatsApp group.

[3. Admission Requirements](https://www.17thnewcastle.org.uk/policy/whatsapp#_3-admission-requirements)

3.1 The following individuals may be admitted to a WhatsApp group operated by the group:

* Parents and carers of young people in the group
* Leaders and trustees of the group
* Young people in the group (where appropriate)
* Members of Scouting who are not part of the group (e.g. District or County members), provided there is a legitimate reason for their inclusion
* Other members with the approval of the Trustee Board.

3.2 Members of the group may be removed from a WhatsApp group at the discretion of the Trustee Board or the group's leadership team.

[4. Rules for WhatsApp Groups](https://www.17thnewcastle.org.uk/policy/whatsapp#_4-rules-for-whatsapp-groups)

4.1 The following rules apply to all WhatsApp groups operated by the group:

* **Do not share personal information about young people in the group.** This includes names, addresses, phone numbers, and any other personal information.
* Do not contact other individuals in the group chat as personal mobile phone numbers are visible to all participants in the group.
* All communication should be respectful and in line with the values of Scouting.
* Parents may not use WhatsApp groups to message leaders directly about their child.
* Parents should not use WhatsApp groups to ask questions about the programme or to report absences.

4.2 WhatsApp is hosted in the United States and is subject to US law. As such, sensitive information including sensitive category data (e.g. health information) should not be shared on WhatsApp.

4.3 Members of the group should not use WhatsApp groups to share personal information about themselves or others.

4.4 Members of the group should not use WhatsApp groups to share inappropriate content, including but not limited to:

* Offensive language
* Discriminatory language
* Inappropriate images or videos
* Links to inappropriate content

[5. Young People in WhatsApp Groups](https://www.17thnewcastle.org.uk/policy/whatsapp#_5-young-people-in-whatsapp-groups)

5.1 Young people may be invited to join a WhatsApp group where appropriate. In these cases, the following additional rules apply:

* There must be two substantive adult leaders (the national membership system must show the role as 'Full' and not 'Provisional'). Any full role providing a DBS and reference check will suffice, including roles not within the section or group.
* The group's Safeguarding Policy must be followed at all times.
* No personal information about young people should be shared in the group.
* Under no circumstances should young people be added to a group without the express permission of their parent or carer.
* Leaders must not message young people directly via WhatsApp, except in the case of an emergency.
  + In these cases, the message should be copied to another leader or parent.

5.2 No permanent group chats should be set up with young people. Temporary groups may be set up for specific events. After an event, the group should be deleted.

5.3 Notwithstanding 5.2, in the event of a safety or safeguarding concern or incident, a group chat may be retained for a period of time to allow for the investigation of the incident. This should be done in consultation with the group's leadership team or The Scout Association (as appropriate).

[6. Reporting Concerns](https://www.17thnewcastle.org.uk/policy/whatsapp#_6-reporting-concerns)

6.1 Adults in the group who have concerns about the content of a WhatsApp group should report their concerns to the group's leadership team. Concerns may also be reported to the Trustee Board.

6.2 Leaders have a duty of care to all members of the group. If a leader has concerns about the content of a WhatsApp group, they should report their concerns to the Trustee Board.

[7. Review](https://www.17thnewcastle.org.uk/policy/whatsapp#_7-review)

7.1 This policy will be reviewed annually by the Trustee Board. The next review is due in September 2026.