



## Staying Connected – Virtual Sessions

To support our #BBatHOME programme, we have been looking at ways for our leaders and young people to stay safely connected through 'Virtual Sessions' during this period. As such we now have some guidance for leaders on how to setup and host interactive virtual sessions with children & young people, in line with what is happening with schools and other youth organisations.

Virtual platforms come with new risks, we must not forget we are dealing with children and young people, and so our interactions must be done safely and appropriately to ensure the safety of all who are taking part.

### Some General Guidance to Follow . . .

- Have a Staff meeting to talk about what you are trying to achieve and how you will do it. The Company Captain should be involved and satisfied that 'due consideration' has been given to the safety of children, young people and leaders.
- Have a practice with leaders first – to give yourselves a chance to try it out and understand how it works.
- Age appropriate sessions - Where possible, children and young people should be invited to the session for their age group.
- Think about your surroundings – who / what can be seen. Ensure you, and anyone else in your household is suitably clothed. If you are at home with family, let them know you are taking part in a Zoom session with young people to avoid any BB members overhearing / or seeing something unsuitable.
- Ideally, sessions should not take place in bedrooms. However, it is recognised that Seniors may have all their media devices set up in their rooms.
- If people are using mobile data instead of a Wi-Fi connection, sessions could be costly - please make sure parents / carers are aware of this.
- Plan sessions carefully - with larger groups think about how young people can let you know they want to speak / contribute. Children & young people joining in should be encouraged NOT to use headphones, so that parents/carers can listen in and monitor.

### Do's and Don'ts

- There **MUST NOT** be any 1 to 1 online session's with children & young people.
- Ensure there is **ALWAYS** a minimum of two registered leaders present during each session. This would ideally be three leaders just in case anybody becomes disconnected. Should for any reason one of the leaders leave the session, including due to a loss of signal, the session must be terminated immediately.
- Seek Permission from Parents/Carers – You **MUST** make contact through parents/carers. Anchors, Juniors and Company members **MUST** only be invited to join a Zoom meeting using their parents/carers account. Parents/carers need to remain nearby for the duration of the session. Where parents/carers give permission, Seniors can join a Zoom meeting via their own account.
- Start the meeting with leaders 5 minutes before so that when children & young people join there is already a minimum of two leaders online. You could send the link around by SMS/Email/WhatsApp once leaders are online and ready to go.

- Do NOT record sessions or allow children and young people to record or take screenshots. As recording sessions creates complications in relation to storage of the recording and who can access it (BB face-to-face sessions are not routinely recorded). Consent would also be required for this.
- Virtual sessions should be advertised well in advance (ideally a week in advance), be held consistently at a regular time, once or twice a week and limited to a maximum of 40 minutes.
- Leaders should keep a record of who attended each virtual session as they would any BB activity.
- If you become concerned about the welfare or safety of a child or young person you should follow BB safeguarding policies and procedures.

**Remember** - Safeguarding and keeping young people safe is central to what we do in The Boys' Brigade. Behaviour by leaders should not be any different online to what we expect during face to face meetings. All online activity MUST be in accordance with our Safeguarding Policy and Leaders Code of conduct. You can view these online at [boys-brigade.org.uk/who-we-are/policies-and-regulations/](https://boys-brigade.org.uk/who-we-are/policies-and-regulations/).

### Reporting Safeguarding Concerns

Please share any concerns with your Captains and Chaplains. For further advice please contact Debbie Moore, Safeguarding manager at [safeguarding@boys-brigade.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@boys-brigade.org.uk) or call **01442 509534**.

### What Online Platform should you use?

We would like leaders to use Zoom, which is a platform we have tested and will enable leaders to easily and safely run virtual meetings. The cloud conferencing service allows live video and/or audio meetings to be hosted, and the 'Basic' plan on Zoom is free allowing meetings up to 40 minutes in length. The great thing about Zoom is that only the person hosting the meeting needs a Zoom account, everybody else joining the meeting just needs a link and an internet connection.

So, we recommend checking out [www.zoom.us](https://www.zoom.us) and setting up an account for your Company to use. As with anything new it is important that you spend some time well in advance of your first meeting going through all the settings.

We recommended changing meeting settings as follows to:

- not allow recording.
- allow only signed-in users to join.
- lock the meeting.
- remove unwanted or disruptive participants.
- prevent removed participants from re-joining.
- turn off file transfer.
- turn off annotation.
- prevent participants from screen sharing.



Also here are a few things you can do during the meeting:

- Mute participants (un-mute as required) to control background noise and avoid people speaking over each other, etc.
- Stop sharing video for a participant (as required).
- Share your screen to help show instructions or other information.

**If you have any questions please contact BB Headquarters at [enquiries@boys-brigade.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@boys-brigade.org.uk) or by phone on 01442 231 681.**