WhatsApp Guidance

WhatsApp groups are an effective way to communicate quickly, and most people are using this method of communication in their personal lives already, which makes them ideal.

Setting up WhatsApp groups

These guidelines are for Local Party members and HQ staff, who wish to set up small WhatsApp groups to facilitate convenient communication channels whilst conducting Party activities.

Those engaging in WhatsApp groups for Party purposes, should read these rules and guidelines in addition to the [Liberal Democrat Members' Code of Conduct](#)

Gaining consent

Only add people to WhatsApp groups once you have obtained their consent. This can be verbal or in writing (eg. email). Explain the purpose and for how long the group is needed.

Alternatively, you could send an 'invite' to each individual through WhatsApp, therefore giving each person control to 'Opt In' to the group.

If an individual does not have access to WhatsApp or does not wish to join the group, you must continue to communicate with them via a different method such as email or text.

If an individual no longer wants to be part of the group, please remove them immediately.

✔️ DO	✖️ DO NOT
Give 'admin' rights for the WhatsApp group to organisers of the activity or appropriate leaders. Ideally 2-3 people.	Don't send an excessive number of messages. Condense multiple reminders/points into one message. If you are the 'admin' for the group and this is happening, speak to or message the individual/s directly, to address the issue.
Remind the members of the community rules - behaviours that are unacceptable and the consequences of such behaviour.	Don't allow heated discussions within threads. Be mindful of tone and the possibility of miscommunication. Instead address behaviour outside of the thread, privately.
Limit participants of the group to Members and Supporters only. Ensure those who cease to be Members/Supporters/part of the activity are promptly removed.	Don't allow the content and tone of the messages to become inappropriate. This includes refraining from swearing, singling out individuals, accusations, gossip.
Archive and/or delete chats when no longer relevant or used.	Don't duplicate groups with similar or identical participants which may lead to confusion of topics or leadership
Use the platform to flag issues and increase the urgency of a particular deadline etc.	Don't use WhatsApp for formal decision making and sign off. Please ensure that all matters relating to electoral law, audit, HR & finance etc are signed off by the relevant staff/member via email.

Keep conversation topics relevant to the purpose of the group chat.	Don't send messages at inappropriate or antisocial times. Be considerate to members of the group.
Use the chat for reminders, asking advice, giving encouragement and praise.	Don't share confidential or personal data via WhatsApp.
Use WhatsApp as a friendly, convenient, and efficient tool to connect staff and volunteers etc.	Don't blur the boundaries between professional and personal relationships/friendships.

Remember! What you post in a WhatsApp group could end up in the public domain.

This may be accidental or deliberate…individuals could use screenshots of messages as part of a complaint process or disclose on social media.

Removing individuals from groups

If you are an 'admin' for the group, you must remove anyone who is no longer a member of the Party. Also remove anyone no longer part of the group, project or activity.

If an individual behaves in a way contrary to the rules and guidelines, the 'admin' for the group, should approach the individual directly to request they stop this behaviour. This may address the issue and they can remain in the WhatsApp group. However, the 'admins' should monitor the situation and if needed and remove an individual from the group entirely if necessary.

Broadcast messages

Local Parties should not use broadcast messages to communicate with the wider membership. The use of messaging via WhatsApp is for small groups who are working on a team project or campaign activity.

Sharing data

We DO NOT advise sending personal or confidential data via WhatsApp. This must be done via a secure method such as an attachment to an email with a password protected file/document.

Wellbeing

Being an admin or member of a WhatsApp group can be challenging. The 24/7 nature of the platform can make boundaries and space to 'switch off' difficult. Messages, whilst encoded, can be screenshotted, and used out of context and/or in a public domain. Furthermore, messages could be requested as part of Subject Access Requests.

To protect your own wellbeing and that of others; i) take it in turns to moderate discussions as these can become exhausting as times; ii) limit the number of chats you are an admin or participant in; iii) do not post comments which you would not be willing to say in a face to face context or make statements you cannot substantiate as these could be subject to libel and defamation.