

# Pokémon Go. What do we need to know?



## **First of all, what is Pokémon GO?**

Pokémon GO is a mobile and tablet app game which lets players find Pokémon (Animated creatures, first created in the 90's, which players have to catch, train and battle with). The game takes place in augmented reality (meaning the game combines real life action with virtual gaming) by using GPS as you walk around towns, cities and other locations to find the Pokémon.

The game has been an overnight sensation with millions playing it around the world.

## **Why does your church need to know?**

Your church might be a 'PokéStop' – real life buildings and landmarks that players have to visit to get certain items they need to play the game. Your church could also be a 'Gym' where players can battle their Pokémon. Some churches have been designated PokéStop or Gyms and other churches have chosen to register themselves as such. Pokémon Go is therefore giving churches an opportunity to meet people from their area who might not normally come to church.

## **How do you know if your church is a Pokestop or a Gym?**

Download Pokémon Go on your mobile or tablet. Through the game you will be able to see if your church is a PokéStop or a gym.

You might also spot people standing outside the church on their phones who may be playing the game and at your 'PokéStop'.

## **What does this mean for our church?**

Buildings that have been designated PokéStops or Gyms are places where those who play the game can gather virtual resources or engage with other players in the game online. The gamers do not need access to the building to undertake these activities but they need to be in the vicinity. In fact, some PokéStops are not even buildings but landmarks. So, in theory, this need have no direct impact on church life. It does, however, present an opportunity for the church to engage positively with a group of people who may not have much experience of church.

### **What can your church to do get involved and good practice points.**

- Place welcome signs outside:
- Have some designated times when gamers can be encouraged to come inside and offer them drinks and snacks. For example if you have regular coffee mornings this could become part of this. The game also uses a lot of battery so why not create a battery charging station? If you've got it, let them connect to the church's Wi-Fi
- Speak to players about the game: learn how to play it yourself, it's a good way to start a conversation that may lead on to other things.
- Hold a Pokémon event during the summer holidays. Encourage people into your building and show good hospitality in making them welcome
- Use social media to promote what you are doing - use the hashtag #PokemonGo.
- Make sure, if you are holding an event or making gamers welcome that church people know about Pokémon GO.
- Be a welcoming church - don't kick people off your church grounds.
- Encourage people in your congregation to play Pokémon GO and join in on the fun.
- Don't pressure gamers into other church events, however do have church activities on display.
- Get to know those who come, chat, share hospitality and show that the church is a place that welcomes all.
- This is a current trend and may or may not last, but why not use the opportunities that is raises for now?

### **Keeping Safe**

The NSPCC has issued advice to parents of those children playing Pokémon GO in the UK (see below). Whilst we would encourage churches to engage with those playing the game, be they adults or children, we also understand the concerns that the NSPCC have raised with regards to keeping children safe. Our first priority as a church should be to provide a safe place for children and vulnerable adults. Please ensure that all the current safeguarding requirements are in place and working effectively in your church. If you envisage opening your building for a general drop in for children and adults, please ensure all church volunteers present have been safely recruited according to Methodist Church policy. The building does not need to be open all the time and this would raise insurance as well as safeguarding questions. If you have specific safeguarding questions, please contact your Circuit Safeguarding Officer or your District Safeguarding Officer.

## ***NSPCC - Pokémon Go: a parent's guide***

*Tips and advice for keeping children safe on Pokémon Go*

*Pokémon Go is a game where you collect and trade cute creatures called Pokémon (Pocket Monsters).*

*It's one of the first popular games to use "augmented reality" - a kind of cross between real life and an online world. The game makes it look like Pokémon appear in real life places by using the GPS and camera on your phone.*

*It's already become a craze in Australia and America, and has made it's way into the news across the world.*

*Here, we'll take you through what you need to know about the game and how you can help keep children using the app safe.*

### **Pokémon Go explained**

#### ***Pokémon***

*Pokémon (Pocket Monsters) are little creatures that can be captured by Pokémon Trainers using a small spherical device called a Poké Ball. There are different types of Pokémon, with different moves, abilities and stats. The aim of the game is to capture as many Pokémon and to win as many 'gyms' as you can to become the Pokémon Master.*

#### ***Pokémon Gyms***

*Pokémon Gyms are buildings located throughout the world where Pokémon Trainers can train and compete. Pokémon Gyms are usually located in public meeting spots, like parks or churches and memorials. This is done using a Google-style in-game map that shows you where the Pokémon and locations are in your real life location.*

#### ***Poké Ball***

*The Poké Ball is a spherical device used to capture Pokémon. The Poké Ball is thrown at Pokémon and when it hits them, the Pokémon are sucked inside.*

#### ***Pokédex***

*Pokédex is an electronic device which stores the data of Pokémon once they're captured. The Pokémon Trainer must attempt to fill the Pokédex by capturing the different types of Pokémon.*

### ***The risks***

*There are loads of good things about the game, and there's a reason it's become so popular. But it's important to learn the risks involved:*

- *Meeting people they don't know face-to-face - The game is designed to bring people together. Usually strangers. So you never know who they might meet.*
- *There's a physical risk - It's easy to forget to look where you're going with this game, but they need to be careful of where they end up. There are already stories of people being lured to places that aren't safe for children.*
- *It can cost a lot of money - There are in-app purchases and other incentives which can cost up to £79.99 (14,500 Pokécoins). Make sure the app's set up without payment options.*
- *Access to personal data - Pokémon Go asks for personal information like your child's birth date and email address, which they're asked to enter or receive through social media accounts. Parents have the right to contact the creators to stop them from using their personal information.*

### References

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