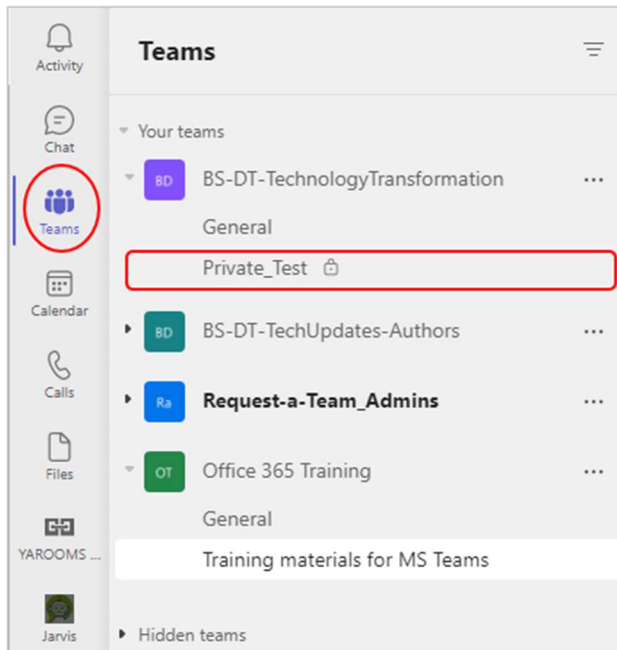# Understanding private channels in Teams

Private channels in Microsoft Teams create confidential spaces for focused collaboration within your teams.

Each team can have up to 30 private channels, and each private channel can have up to 250 members.

Who can access a private channel?

Only the users on the team who are owners or members of a particular private channel can access it.

Anyone, including guests, can be added as a member of a private channel as long as they are already a member of the parent team. You cannot include someone in a private channel if they are not a member of the main team.
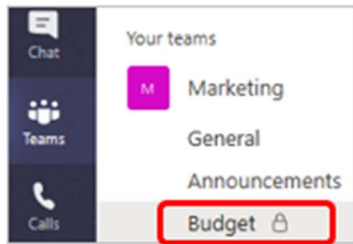
Why do we need private channels?

You might want to use a private channel if you want to limit collaboration to a 'need to know' basis or if you want to facilitate communication between a group of people assigned to a specific project, without having to create an additional team to manage.

For example, a private channel is useful in these scenarios:

- A group of people in a team want a focused space to collaborate without having to create a separate team.
- A subset of people in a team want a private channel to discuss sensitive information, such as budgets, resourcing, strategic positioning, and so on.

How can I tell if a channel is private?

A lock icon indicates a private channel.
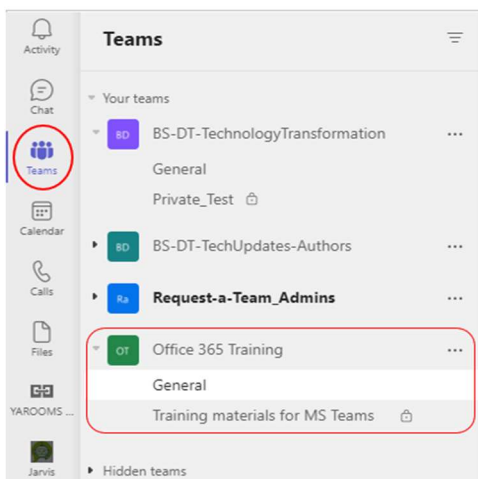

Who has visibility of a private channel?

Team owners can see the names of all private channels in their team and can also delete any private channel in the team. *(A deleted private channel can be restored within 30 days after it's deleted).*

However, team owners **cannot** see the files, conversations and member list of a private channel **unless they are actually members** of that private channel.
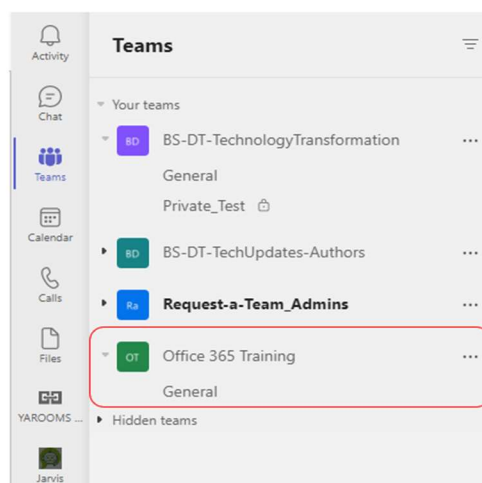
Team members can only see private channels that they've been added to - the names do not appear in the teams list of anyone not a member of the private channel(s).

For example:

Can non-members see files stored in a private channel on SharePoint?

No. Each private channel has its own SharePoint site to ensure access to private channel files is restricted to only members of the private channel.

These sites are created with their own document library in SharePoint, again to ensure restricted access to anything stored there.
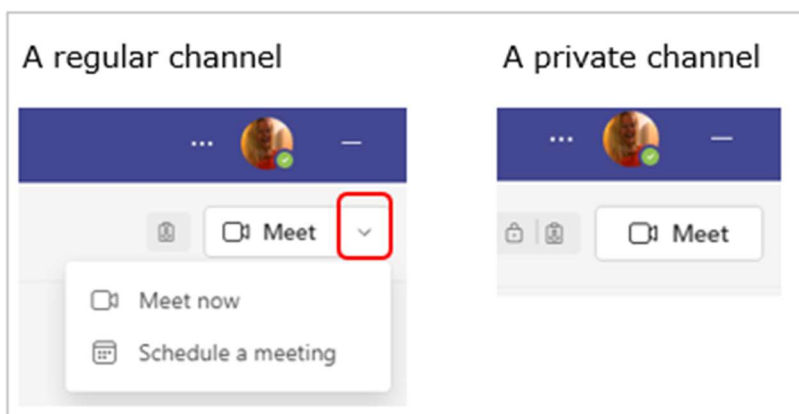
Can I move a private channel to another team?

When a private channel is created, it's linked to the parent team and can't be moved to a different team.

Can I change a private channel to a regular one?

No, channels can't be converted to standard channels and vice versa.

Are there any limitations for private channels?

Currently, you cannot schedule a meeting from a private channel - there is only the option to 'meet now'.

Private channel creation

By default, any team owner or team member can create a private channel, but external guests can't create them (i.e. those without a Barnardos email. The ability to create private channels can be managed at the team level and at the organisation level.

The person who creates a private channel is the owner of that channel, and only the private channel owner can directly add or remove people from it. A private channel owner can add any team member to a private channel they created, including guests.

Members of a private channel have a secure conversation space, and when new members are added, they can see all previous conversations in that channel.

Adding and removing owners and members

A private channel owner can't be removed through Teams if they are the last owner of one or more private channels.

If a private channel owner leaves your organisation or if they are removed from the Microsoft 365 Group associated with the team, a member of the private channel is automatically promoted to be the private channel owner.
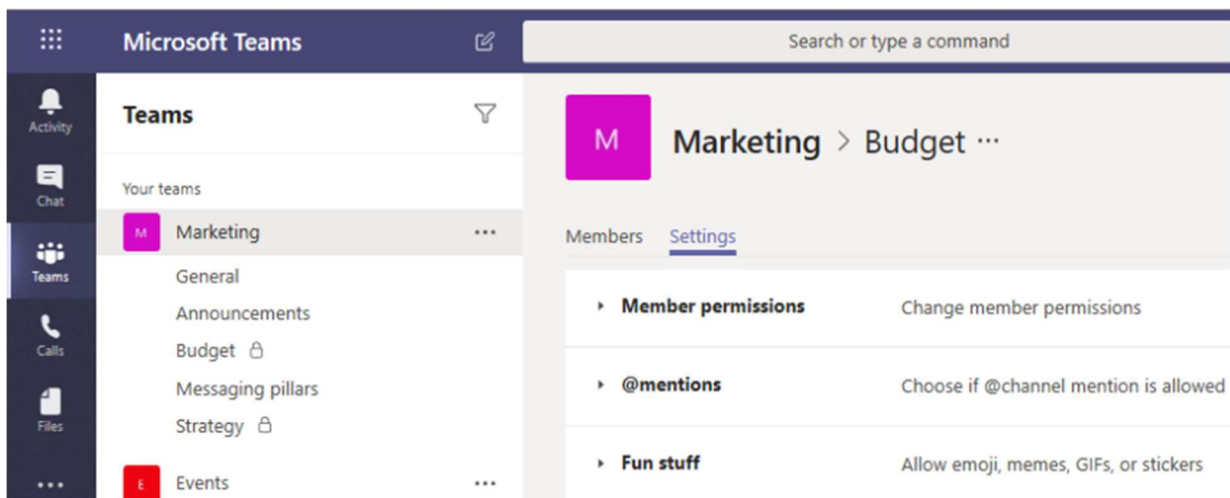
If a team member leaves a team or is removed, that user will also leave or be removed from all private channels within that team. If the user is added back to the team, they must be then manually added back to the private channels in the team.

Channel owner settings

Each private channel has its own settings that the channel owner can manage - including the ability to add and remove members, add tabs, and use @mentioning for the entire channel.

It's important to remember that these settings are independent of the parent team settings. When a private channel is created, it inherits settings from the parent team but, after that, its settings can be changed independently of the parent team settings.

A private channel owner can click 'Manage channel' and then use the 'Members' and 'Settings' tabs to add or remove members and edit settings.

Private channel owner and member actions

The following table outlines what actions owners, members, and guests can do in private channels.

Action	Team owner	Team member	Team guest	Private channel owner	Private channel member	Private channel guest
Create private channel	Admin controlled	Admin and team owner controlled	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
Delete private channel	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
Leave private channel	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes unless they are the last owner	Yes	Yes
Edit private channel	No	N/A	N/A	Yes	No	No
Restore deleted private channel	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No
Add members	No	N/A	N/A	Yes	No	No
Edit settings	No	N/A	N/A	Yes	No	No
Manage tabs and apps	No	N/A	N/A	Yes, apps must be installed for the team	Channel owner controlled	No