



AIM

The aim of the Mobile Phone Policy is to promote safe and appropriate practice through establishing clear and robust acceptable use guidelines.

This is achieved through balancing protection against potential misuse with the recognition that mobile phones are effective communication tools – which in turn can contribute to safeguarding practice and protection.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all individuals who have access to personal or work-related mobile phones on site. This includes practitioners, volunteers, committee members, young people, parents, carers, visitors and community users. The list is not exhaustive.

POLICY STATEMENT

It is recognised that it is the enhance functions of many mobile phones that cause the most concern, and which are most susceptible to misuse. Misuse includes the taking and distribution of indecent images, exploitation and bullying.

When mobile phones are misused it can impact on an individual’s dignity, privacy and right to confidentiality. Such concerns are not exclusive to children and young people; hence there is a duty to protect the needs and vulnerabilities of all.

It is appreciated that it can be very difficult to detect when such devices are present or being used, particularly in relation to enhanced functions, such as cameras. The use of all mobile phones is therefore limited, regardless of their capabilities. The aim is to avoid distraction and disruption to the working day, and to minimise the opportunities for any individual to make any covert images or misuse functions in any other way.

Designated “mobile free” areas are situated within the setting are

- Toilets
- Classrooms whilst children are changing for activities

A zero-tolerance policy is in place with regards to the use of personal or work-related mobiles by any individual in these areas.

CODE OF CONDUCT

A code of conduct is promoted with the aim of creating a cooperative workforce, where staff work as a team, have high values and respect each other, thus creating a strong morale and sense of commitment leading to increased productivity.

It is therefore ensured that all practitioners:

- Have a clear understanding of what constitutes misuse.
- Are vigilant and alert to potential warning signs.
- Know how to minimise risk.
- Avoid putting themselves into compromising situations which could be misinterpreted and lead to possible allegations.
- Understand the need for professional boundaries and clear guidance regarding acceptable use.
- Are responsible for self-moderation of their own behaviours.
- Are aware of the importance of reporting concerns promptly.

It is fully recognised that studies consistently indicate that imposing rigid regulations and/or “bans” on the action of others can be counterproductive, leading to a culture of suspicion, uncertainty and secrecy.

The imposition of rigorous, inflexible rules is therefore avoided, unless the potential risks of not enforcing them far out-weigh the benefits. An agreement of trust is therefore promoted regarding the carrying and use of mobile phones within the setting environment, which is agreed to by all practitioners.

PROCEDURES

Personal mobiles

Effective guidance is in place to avoid the use of mobile phones causing unnecessary disruptions and distractions within the workplace, and to ensure effective safeguarding practice is promoted to protect against potential misuse.

In the interests of equality, and to further promote safety, the guidance applies to any individual who has a mobile phone on site, including children, parents and visitors, as detailed below:

Practitioners are permitted to have their mobile phones about their person; however there is a clear expectation that all personal use is limited to lunch and/or tea breaks.

Other than in agreed exceptional circumstances, phones must be switched off and calls and texts must not be taken or made during lesson time.

Practitioners are not permitted, in any circumstance to use their phones for taking, recording or sharing images and ‘mobile free’ areas must be observed at all times.

Practitioners are not permitted to use their own personal phones for contacting children, young people and their families within or outside of the setting.

Parents, visitors and contractors are respectfully requested not to use their mobile phones in any of the designated mobile free areas. Should phone calls and/or texts need to be taken or made, use is restricted to those areas not accessed by children in order to avoid any unnecessary disturbance or disruption to others.

Under no circumstances is any individual permitted to take images or make recordings on a mobile phone. Any individual bringing a personal device into the setting must ensure that it contains no inappropriate or illegal content.

WORKING OFF SITE

The use of a designated mobile is permitted as it is;

- an essential part of the emergency toolkit which is taken on off-site trips.

- an effective communication aid, enabling text, email messages and calls to be made and received.
- a back-up facility should problems be experienced with the landline – or where contact needs to be made outside of work hours.

Effective security measures are in place to safeguard against any potential misuse. Only authorised individuals have access to the work mobile, stored securely when not in use.

The work mobile is clearly labeled as such, and additional features such as cameras are disabled or not used.

DRIVING

If any practitioner is required to drive in a working capacity, and has responsibility for the work mobile, the phone must be switched off during driving. It is strongly recommended that practitioners follow the same procedures regarding their own personal mobile phones.

Under no circumstances should practitioners drive whilst taking a phone call. This also applies to hands-free and wireless connections, which are considered a distraction rather than a safer alternative.

SAFE STORAGE

Practitioners leave their belongings in safe storage at their own risk. It is therefore recommended that phones are security marked, password protected and insured. No liability for loss and damages is accepted.

As well as safeguarding children and avoiding any unnecessary disruptions during the day, this procedure also aims to protect staff against any unfounded allegations.

EMERGENCY CONTACT

It is recognised that mobile phones provide direct contact to others, and at times provide a necessary reassurance due to their ease of access, particularly at stressful times.

Practitioners, therefore, in agreed exceptional circumstances are permitted to keep the volume of their phone switched on. This is to enhance their own well-being and peace of mind, to reduce stress and worry and to enable them to concentrate more effectively on their work.

Such use will be for an agreed limited period only, until any concerns or issues leading to the exceptional circumstance request have been resolved.

It is ensured at all times that the landline telephone remains connected and operational, except in circumstances beyond control. This means that it is available for emergency/urgent contact at all times.

The school mobile phone and personal mobile phones will need to be used if the school needs to act upon the Disaster Recovery Plan. (See Disaster Recovery Plan)

This Review: February 2013

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