

MOBILE PHONE /CAMERA POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Mobile phone and camera technology has become more sophisticated over recent years and will continue to evolve. Wireless connections in particular extends the capabilities of mobile phones further and allow access to new content and services, such as the internet, social networking sites and instant messaging. Most mobile phones offer camera, video and audio recording as standard.
- 1.2 Mobile phones/cameras alongside other technologies aim to change the way we communicate. The speed of communication will often provide security and reassurance; however, as with any other form of technology, there are associated risks. Children and young people must be encouraged to understand such risks to enable them to develop the appropriate strategies which will keep them safe.
- 1.3 As with online safety issues generally, risks to children and young people should be broadly categorised under the headings of:
- Content
 - Contact
 - Conduct
 - Commerce

These issues are to be managed by reducing availability, restricting access and increasing resilience.

- 1.4 This philosophy should be applied to the use of mobile phones/cameras through this policy. Acceptable use and management of mobile phones/cameras is therefore to be agreed by all service users. There is to be a clear expectation that the personal use of mobile phones is to be limited to specific times and uses and agreed with the designated person for safeguarding/child protection manager. Safe and secure storage facilities are to be made available to store personal belongings as necessary.

1.5 Under no circumstances are images, video or audio recordings to be made without prior explicit written consent by the designated person for safeguarding/child protection or manager.

2. Aim

2.1 The aim of the Mobile Phone/Camera Policy is to protect children and young people from harm, by ensuring the appropriate management and use of mobile phones/cameras by all individuals who come into contact with the setting.

2.2 Children and young people are also to be empowered with the skills to manage the changes in technology in a safe and appropriate way; and to be alert to the potential risks of such use.

2.3 This is to be achieved through balancing protection and potential misuse. It is therefore to be recognised that alongside the potential risks, mobile phones/cameras continue to be effective communication tools. This in turn is to contribute to safeguarding practice and protection. There is no requirement or need to automatically ban the use of mobile phones or cameras in any setting.

3. Scope

3.1 The Mobile Phone/Camera Policy will apply to all individuals who are to have access to and/or users of personal and/or work-related mobile phones within the broadest context of the setting environment. This will include children and young people, parents and carers, early year's practitioners and their managers, volunteers, students, committee members, visitors, contractors and community users. This list is not to be considered exhaustive.

4. Policy Statement

4.1 It is to be recognised that it is the enhanced functions of many mobile phones that will give the most cause for concern; and which should be considered the most susceptible to potential misuse. Examples of misuse are to include the taking and distribution of indecent images, exploitation and bullying.

4.2 It must be understood that should mobile phones be misused, there will be a negative impact on an individual's safety, dignity, privacy and right to confidentiality. Such concerns are not to be considered exclusive to children and young people, so the needs or vulnerabilities of all must be respected and protected.

4.3 Mobile phones and cameras will also cause an unnecessary distraction during the working day and are often to be considered intrusive when used in the company of others.

- 4.4 It will often be very difficult to detect when mobile phones/cameras are present or being used. The use of all mobile phones/cameras needs to be effectively managed to ensure the potential for misuse is to be minimised.
- 4.5 Designated 'mobile/camera free' areas should be identified within the setting and signs to this effect are to be displayed throughout. The areas which should be considered most vulnerable include;
- Sleep areas
 - Changing areas
 - Toilets
 - Bathrooms

5. Code of conduct

- 5.1 A code of conduct should be promoted with the aim of creating an informed workforce who will work together to safeguard and promote positive outcomes for the children and young people in their care.
- 5.2 It is to be ensured that all practitioners and their managers will:
- Be aware of the need to protect children from harm.
 - Have a clear understanding of what constitutes misuse.
 - Know how to minimise risk.
 - Be vigilant and alert to potential warning signs of misuse.
 - Avoid putting themselves into compromising situations which could be misinterpreted and lead to potential allegations.
 - Understand the need for professional boundaries and clear guidance regarding acceptable use.
 - Be responsible for the self-moderation of their own behaviours.
 - Be aware of the importance of reporting concerns immediately.
- 5.3 It is to be recognised that studies consistently indicate that imposing rigid regulations and/or 'bans' on the actions of others are counterproductive and should be avoided. Such imposition will lead to a culture of suspicion, uncertainty and secrecy. An agreement of trust is therefore to be promoted regarding the carrying and use of mobile phones in the early years setting. This is to be agreed by all service users, including all children, young people and adults who are to come into contact with the early years setting.

6. Procedures

- 6.1 Clearly defined policies and procedures will aim to ensure effective safeguarding practices are in place to protect children from harm and exposure to behaviours associated with misuse. The need to ensure mobile phones will not cause unnecessary and/or unsafe disruptions and distractions in the workplace are also to be considered.

- 6.2 Acceptable use and management of mobile phones is to be agreed by all service users. There is to be a clear expectation, for example, that all personal use of mobile phones is to be limited to allocated lunch and/or tea breaks, unless it is to be otherwise agreed by the designated person for safeguarding/child protection. Such authorised use is to be monitored and recorded. Safe and secure storage facilities are to be made available to store personal belongings as necessary.
- 6.3 The recording, taking and sharing of images, video and audio on any mobile phone is to be avoided; except where it is explicitly agreed by the manager or designated person for safeguarding/child protection. Such authorised use is to be monitored and recorded. All mobile phone/camera use is to be open to scrutiny and the designated person for safeguarding/child protection or manager should be able to withdraw or restrict authorisation for use at any time if necessary.
- 6.4 Practitioners and their managers are to be directed not to use their own personal mobile phones for contacting children and young people, parents and carers. If it is necessary, it must be with the explicit consent of both the designated person for safeguarding/child protection or the setting manager and the parent or carer; unless it is considered an emergency. Care is to be taken to ensure that work mobiles are not to be exploited in a similar way.
- 6.5 All service users, including parents, carers, visitors and contractors should be respectfully advised that their mobile phones/cameras are not to be used in designated mobile phone/camera use free areas. Should it be considered necessary for mobile phone calls and/or texts to be taken or made, efforts should be made to avoid any unnecessary disturbance or disruption to children and young people. No images, video or audio recordings are to be made without prior explicit written consent by the designated person for safeguarding/child protection/the manager.
- 6.6 All individuals who are to bring personal devices into the early years setting must ensure that they hold no inappropriate or illegal content.

7. Work Mobile/Camera

- 7.1 Settings should ideally use a designated work mobile or camera. This is considered to be the safest choice but also is;
- An effective communication tool enabling text, email messages and calls to be made and received.
 - An essential part of the emergency toolkit which is to be taken on short trips and outings.
 - A back-up facility should landline facilities be unavailable – or where contact needs to be made outside of operational hours.
- 7.2 Effective security procedures are to be put in place to safeguard against any potential misuse. Only authorised individuals should have access to the work mobile, which is to be password protected and to be stored securely when not

in use. All use is to be recorded and monitored by the designated person for safeguarding/child protection/manager. Material held on the work mobile or camera should only ever be downloaded onto a works computer, never on a personal device.

7.3 Personal calls are not to be made on the work mobile phone other than in agreed circumstances. Personal contact will be permitted to be made via the work mobile in the event of an emergency.

7.4 The work mobile phone/camera is to be clearly labelled as such.

8. Driving

8.1 Practitioners and their managers who will be required to drive on behalf of the setting must ensure any work/and or personal mobile phones are to be switched off whilst driving.

8.2 Under no circumstances, when driving on behalf of the organisation, should practitioners or their managers make or take a phone call, text or use the enhanced functions of a mobile phone. This should also apply to the use of hands-free and wireless connections, which should be considered a distraction rather than a safer alternative.

9. Safe Storage

9.1 A designated safe and secure area is to be made available to practitioners and their managers for the storage of personal belongings during the working day.

9.2 Practitioners and their managers should recognise that they are to leave any belongings in such storage areas at their own risk. It is recommended that should mobile phones/cameras be stored, they are to be securely marked, password protected and insured. No liability for loss and/or damage can be accepted.

10. Emergency Contact

10.1 It is to be recognised that mobile phones provide direct contact to others, and will often provide necessary reassurances due to their ease of access, particularly at difficult times. Agreed acceptable use of mobile phones is to therefore be promoted. This is to afford practitioners and their manager's peace of mind, by reducing stress and worry and is therefore to allow them to concentrate more fully on their work. Such use must be subject to management, monitoring and review.

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

10.3 The reliance on an answer phone is to be avoided unless the setting is closed or where children are to be taken off the premises for a trip or outing. Any answer phone is to be checked promptly on return to the setting.

11. Authorisation and Review

Agreed by:

Authorised Signatory:

Date:

Date of Review: