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# Policy on mobile phone and smart watch use

## Policy Statement

Mobile phone and smart watch technology has become more sophisticated over recent years and will continue to evolve. Wireless connections in particular are to extend the capabilities of mobile phones and watches further, which will allow access to new content and services, such as the internet, social networking sites and instant messaging. Many mobile phones and apple watches offer camera, video and audio recording as standard.

Mobile phones and apple watches, alongside other technologies aim to change the way we communicated. This speed of communication will often provide security and reassurance; however, as with any other form of technology there are to be 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.

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.

This philosophy is to be applied to the use of mobile phone and smart watch policy. Acceptable use and management of mobile phones and smart watches is therefore to be agreed by all service users. There is to be a clear expectation that the

personal use of mobile phones and smart watches is to be limited to specific times and uses as to be agreed with the Senior Designated Person for Safeguarding. Any authorised use of mobile phones is to be monitored and recorded. Safe and secure storage facilities are to be made available to store personal belongings as necessary. Staff are prohibited from wearing smart watches with cameras during working hours, if worn they should be stored in staffs personal lockers until home time.

Under no circumstances are images, video or audio recordings to be made without prior explicit written consent by the Senior Designated Person for safeguarding.

## **Aim**

The aim of the mobile phone and smart watches policy is to protect children and young people from harm, by ensuring the appropriate management and use of mobile phones by all individuals who are to come into contact with the early years setting.

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.

This is to be achieved through balancing protection and potential misuse. It is therefore to be recognised that alongside the potential risks, mobile phones and smart watches continue to be effective communication tools. This in turn is to contribute to safeguarding practice and protection.

The mobile phone and smart watches policy will apply to all individuals who are to have access to and or be users of personal and or work related mobile phones and smart watches within the broadest context of the setting environment. This will include children and young people, parents and carers, early years practitioners and their managers, volunteers, students, contractors and community users. This list is not to be considered exhaustive.

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It is to be recognised that it is the enhanced functions of many mobile phones and smart watches 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.

It must be understood that should mobiles 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 and vulnerabilities of all must be respected and protected.

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

It will often be very difficult to detect when mobile phones and smart watches are present or being used. The use of all mobile phones and smart watches needs to be effectively managed to ensure the potential for misuse is to be minimised.

Designated “mobile use free” areas are to be situated within the early years 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

## **Code of conduct**

A code of conduct is to 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.

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.

It is to be recognised that studies consistently indicate that imposing rigid regulations and/or bans on 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 settings. 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.

## **Procedures**

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 and smart watches will not cause unnecessary and/or unsafe disruptions and distractions in the workplace are also to be considered.

Acceptable use and management of mobile phones and smart watches is to be agreed by all service users. There is to be a clear expectation for example, that all personal use of mobile phones and smart watches is to be limited to allocated lunch and/or tea breaks, unless it is to be otherwise agreed by the Senior Designated Person for safeguarding. 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.

The recordings, taking and sharing of images, video and audio on any mobile phone and smart watch is to be avoided, except where it is to be explicitly agreed otherwise by the senior Designated Person for Safeguarding. Such authority use is to be monitored and recorded. All mobile phone and smart watches use is to be open to scrutiny and the Senior Designated Person for Safeguarding is to be able to withdraw or restrict authorisation for use at any time if it is to be deemed necessary.

Practitioners and their managers are to be encouraged not to use their own personal mobile phones and smart watches for contacting children and young people, parents and carers. If it is to be deemed necessary, it must be with the explicit written consent of both the Senior Designated Person for Safeguarding and the parent or carer, unless it is to be considered an emergency. Care is to be taken to ensure that work mobiles are not to be exploited in a similar way.

Children and young people are to be enabled to have access to their own personal mobile phones should they choose. This will be subject to signed agreement by the parent or carer. Safe management and acceptable use of such mobile phones is to be promoted and monitored. Children and young people's mobile phones are to be switched off or to be set on silence during the course of the day, except where express signed permission is to be given to do otherwise.

All service users, including parents, carers, visitors, and contractors should be respectfully advised that their mobile phones and smart watches are only to be used in designated mobile use free areas. Should it be considered necessary for mobile phone and smart watch calls and/or texts to be taken or made, efforts should be made to avoid any unnecessary disturbance or disruption to children or young people. No images, video or audio recordings are to be made without prior explicit written consent by the Senior Designated Person for Safeguarding.

All individuals who are to bring personal devices into the early years setting must ensure that they hold no inappropriate or illegal content.

## **Work mobile**

The use of a designated work mobile is to be promoted as it considered to be

- 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 out 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.
- Taking photos of activities to be uploaded on the centres promotional TV.

Effective security procedures are to be put in place to safeguard against any potential misuse. Only authorised individuals are to 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 Senior Designated Person for safeguarding.

Personal calls are not to be made on the works mobile phone, other than in circumstance to be agreed. Personal contact will be permitted to be made via the work mobile in the event of an emergency. All such communication are to be logged.

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

## **Driving**

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

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

## **Safe Storage**

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.

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 be stored, they are to be security marked, password protected and insured. No liability for loss and /or damage is to be accepted.

## **Emergency contact**

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 time. Agreed acceptance 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.

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.

The reliance on an answer phone is to be avoided unless the early years setting should be closed or where children are to be taken off the premises for a trip or outing. It must always be ensured that the answer phone is to be checked promptly on opening or return.

Signed.....

Name.....

Date.....

Review

date.....