AUTISM GUERNSEY

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR CHILDREN

Introduction

This Policy provides guidance on how our charity uses the internet and social media, and the procedures for doing so. It also outlines how we expect the staff and volunteers who work for us, and the children or young people who are service users of our charity, to behave online.

It is noted that social media can be a preferred means of communication for people with autism and that digital technology has become an important part of everyday life and offers exciting opportunities. However, the increasing number of cases where workplace practice has highlighted inappropriate use of technology, grooming behaviour and an inability to challenge colleagues has demonstrated the need for clear practice guidance for workers and organisations around safer working practice in this area.

This guidance builds on the 'Safer Working Practice Guidance for adults working with children and their families' issued by the Government Offices in England in 2007.

Aims

The aims of our online safety policy are:

- To protect all children and young people involved with our charity and who make use of technology (such as mobile phones, games consoles and the internet) while in our care.
- To provide staff and volunteers with policy and procedure information regarding online safety and inform them how to respond to incidents.
- To ensure our charity is operating in line with our values and within the law regarding how we behave online.

Understanding the online world

As part of using the internet and social media, our charity will:

- Understand the safety aspects – including what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour for staff and children/young people – when using websites, social media, apps and other forms of digital communication.
- Be aware that it doesn't matter what device is being used for digital interaction, but that the same safety aspects apply whether it is a computer, mobile phone or game console.
- When using social media platforms (including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram), ensure that we adhere to relevant legislation and good practice guidelines.

- Regularly review existing safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that online safeguarding issues are fully integrated, including:
  - Making sure concerns of abuse or disclosures that take place online are written into our reporting procedures including online bullying ('cyberbullying').
- Provide training for the person responsible for managing our organisation's online presence.

Managing our online presence

Our online presence through our website or social media platforms will adhere to the following guidelines:

- All social media accounts will be password-protected, and at least 3 members of staff will have access to each account.
- The account will be monitored by a designated person, who will have been appointed by the Services Manager.
- The designated person managing our online presence will seek advice from our designated Safeguarding Lead to advise on safeguarding requirements.
- A designated supervisor will remove inappropriate posts by children/young people or staff, explaining why, and informing anyone who may be affected (as well as the parents of any children/young people involved).
- Account, page and event settings will be set to 'private' so that only invited charity members can see their content.
- Identifying details such as a child's home address, school name or telephone number shouldn't be posted on social media platforms.
- Any posts or correspondence will be consistent with our aims.
- We'll make sure children and young people are aware of who manages our social media accounts and who to contact if they have any concerns about the running of the account.
- Parents will be asked to give their approval if we communicate with their children through social media, or by any other means of communication.
- Parents will need to give permission for photographs or videos of their child to be posted on social media.
- All of our accounts and email addresses will be appropriate and fit for purpose.

What we expect of staff and volunteers

- Staff should be aware of this Policy and behave in accordance with it.
- Staff should seek advice of the designated safeguarding lead if they have any concerns about the use of the internet or social media.
- Staff should communicate any messages they wish to send out to children and young people to the designated person responsible for the organisation's online presence.

- Staff should not 'friend' or 'follow' children or young people from personal accounts on social media.
- Staff should make sure any content posted is accurate and appropriate, as young people may 'follow' them on social media.
- Staff should not communicate with young people via personal accounts or private messages
- Rather than communicating with parents through personal social media accounts, staff should choose a more formal means of communication, such as face-to-face, in an email or in writing, or use an organisational account, profile or website.
- At least one other member of staff should be copied in to any emails sent to children or young people.
- Staff should avoid communicating with children or young people via email outside of normal office hours.
- Emails should be signed off in a professional manner, avoiding the use of emojis or symbols such as 'kisses' ('X's).
- Any disclosures of abuse reported through social media should be dealt with in the same way as a face-to-face disclosure, according to our reporting procedures.
- Smartphone users should respect the private lives of others and not take or distribute pictures of other people if it could invade their privacy.
- Staff and young people must not engage in 'sexting' or send pictures to anyone that are obscene, indecent or menacing.

What we expect of children and young people

- Children should be aware of this Online Safety Policy and agree to its terms. This will be discussed at their initial meeting with a member of staff.
- We expect children and young people's behaviour online to be consistent with the guidelines set out in this Policy, including smart phones, tablets and consoles.

Using mobile phones or other digital technology to communicate

When using mobile phones (or other devices) to communicate by voice, video or text (including texting, email and instant messaging), we'll take the following precautions to ensure children's and young people's safety:

- Staff will avoid having children's or young people's personal mobile numbers and will instead seek contact through a parent or guardian.
- Staff should have a separate phone from their personal one for any contact with parents or young people.
- Texts will be used for communicating information – such as reminding children or young people about upcoming events – and not to engage in conversation – unless appropriate because of preferred means of communication due to autism.

- If a young person misinterprets such communication and tries to engage a staff member in conversation, the member of staff will take the following steps:
  - End the conversation or stop replying
  - Suggest discussing the subject further at the next club meeting or event
  - If concerned about the child or young person, provide contact details for the Charity's lead welfare officer or appropriate agencies.

Using mobile phones during activities

So that all children can enjoy and actively take part in activities, we discourage the use of mobile phones during such activities. As part of this Policy we will:

- Make children/young people aware of how and who to contact if there is an emergency or a change to previously agreed arrangements with the charity.
- Advise parents that it may not be possible to contact children/young people during activities and provide a contact within the club who will be reachable should there be an emergency.
- Explain to young people how using mobile phones during activities has an impact on their safe awareness of their environment, and their level of participation and achievement.

Use of other digital devices and programmes

The principles in this Policy apply no matter which current or future technology is used – including computers, laptops, tablets, web-enabled games consoles and smart TV's – and whether an app. programme or website is used.

If any digital devices are used as part of activities within the charity:

- We expect children and young people to adhere to the guidelines surrounding online use and behaviour set out in this Policy.
- We'll establish appropriate restrictions , more commonly known as 'parental controls' on any device provided to prevent misuse or harm.

As a charity, we commit to implementing this Policy and addressing any concerns quickly and within these guidelines.

Date Policy Adopted: _____

Signature of Chair: _____

Date Policy to be Reviewed: _____