

WRBC Social Media Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Definitions. Social media are websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to communicate with others. The number and type of social media websites and apps are constantly changing and developing, which include but are not limited to Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Pinterest and many others. More general online communication includes email, online video (eg. Skype) and messaging. For the purposes of this policy the term 'social media' incorporates all forms of communication as referred to above.

1.2 This policy sets out how we expect all members of staff (employees and volunteers) to conduct any online or electronic communication with children & young people that WRBC work with through social media, email or other mobile communication such as text messaging. Many children & young people use the internet and social media to communicate with each other. This brings important new opportunities for our youth work, but also potential risks and challenges.

1.3 We also recognise the need to protect staff from inappropriate contact from children & young people in their personal lives and from situations that may make them vulnerable to allegations of wrongful conduct.

2.0 Principles

2.1 As employees and volunteers, our lives are an example to the children & young people who know us. That means that how we behave, speak and treat others online is just as important as how we act face to face.

2.2 Whilst online communication may be a valuable addition to our work, it does not replace the time we spend with children & young people in person.

2.3 Our "digital lives" - how we present and conduct ourselves online - should not be a misrepresentation or exaggeration of who we are in reality. We will always seek to be honest and truthful about ourselves online, and avoid anonymous communications.

2.4 The advent of social media and online communications creates new issues in safeguarding and protecting children & young people. We will always prioritise the need to protect children & young people.

3.0 Compliance with Safeguarding Children agenda

3.1 We will ensure that our staff follow the requirements of all relevant legislation as well as the WRBC Safeguarding Policy and procedures and the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).

3.2 If a disclosure is made, or a concern has arisen, staff should not use social media to follow up or further investigate the matter.

3.3 We will train our staff to follow this policy and we will regularly monitor its implementation. In addition, we will carry out a full review of this policy annually.

4.0 Reasons for contacting a young person using social media

4.1 We recognise that there will be times when it is necessary and important to use social media: for example,

sometimes it is easier for a child or young person to express a concern, thought or question using a text message or email rather than in person.

4.2 We will only use social media for genuine reasons relating to work with a child or young person, not for general socialising or unnecessary contact.

4.3 Genuine reasons could include responding to a question or comment from a child or young person, contacting them to reassure them of support or confirming arrangements for a meeting or activity.

4.4 It is not appropriate to have private non-work related contact with children & young people with whom WRBC is working using electronic communication

4.5 Unnecessary contact could include sharing personal issues or anything that might burden a child or young person. Excessive contact will also be inappropriate.

4.6 Employees and volunteers will make their line manager or team leader aware when they are using social media with a child or young person.

4.7 Staff should not initiate or respond to contact with a child or young person between 9pm and 8am unless the child or young person is at risk and there is no alternative means of communication.

4.8 Staff should take great care not to use language that might give the wrong impression or create misunderstanding when communicating with a child or young person, especially when using the informal language and shorthand often used in texts. Employees and volunteers should seek advice from a line manager or team leader whenever there is doubt or concern over the content or context of electronic communication

5.0 Parental and Carer awareness and consent

5.1 We recognise that social media is difficult for parents and carers to monitor. We will explain our policies and practice to parents and carers and seek to ensure they are aware that we use social media as part of our work with children & young people.

5.2 Unless a child or young person is at risk or there are extenuating circumstances, we will observe a parent's or carer's wish that we do not use social media to contact a child or young person.

6. Mobile phones and texting

6.1 Employees and volunteers should not give their mobile phone number to children or young people with whom WRBC is working unless they have agreed with their line manager or team leader that it is appropriate to do so.

6.2. Staff should observe the same care in language used as detailed in 4.8.

6.3 Where it is possible, a record of texts sent and received should be kept backed up electronically for reference and made available to a line manager or team leader if required.

6.4 Mobile phones must not be used to take photographs or video footage of any children under 7 years old.

6.5 All photographs taken on personal devices (cameras, phones, tablets, etc.) will be uploaded to the appointed storage location within the timescale identified in the photo policy. Following this, the photographs and any copies of the photographs will be removed from the personal device.

7.0 Email

7.1 Staff should only use an agreed email account for email contact with children & young people with whom WRBC is working, which will normally be an account set up specifically for this purpose. Staff must not use their personal email accounts for contact with children & young people.

7.2 Staff should observe the same care in language used as detailed in 4.8.

7.3 A record of emails sent and received should be kept back up electronically for reference and made available to a line manager or team leader if required.

8.0 Social networking and instant messaging

8.1 Unlike email or texting, social networking and instant messaging involves the possibility of contact with the friends of the child or young person or of the employee or volunteer. This raises particular concerns for safeguarding children & young people.

8.2 Staff should only use an agreed social networking or instant messaging account for contact with children & young people with whom WRBC is working, which will normally be an account set up specifically for this purpose on behalf of a group rather than an individual. These may include facebook, whatsapp, instagram and imessage groups. All groups must always include at least two adults within them.

8.3 Staff must not use their personal social networking or instant messaging accounts for contact with children or young people. It is appropriate to have contact with young adults with whom WRBC has previously been working unless they are identified by WRBC as 'adults at risk'.

8.4 Staff should ensure that the content of their social networking accounts, including pictures are appropriate. Comments and other content must not be derogatory towards those with whom WRBC is working, including children, young people, school staff and other organisations. Applications, groups and other content must be appropriate to the role of a staff member of WRBC.

9.0 Record Keeping

9.1 Staff must contact the Safeguarding Trustee before using Social Media as a means of contact for individuals or groups, giving the information in 9.2

9.2 The Safeguarding Trustee will keep records of those leaders who are using social media to contact young people, detailing the nature of the contact, timescales (start / finish dates or ongoing from date), those with whom contact is being made.

9.3 Records will be reviewed, at least annually, with the Designated Safeguarding Officer.

Dated: July 2016

Review: July 2017

Name/Position:

Signed: