

T S C P

The safe communication policy

1.1 POLICY STATEMENT

The protection of both young people within the work place is essential
In complying with the child protection policy that is required for individual Organisations. The safe communication policy provides practical guidelines to enable professionals to communicate with young people safely when using different forms of communication. The forms of communication this policy is referring to are the following: text messages, phone calls, letters, e-mails, communicating via MSN

1.2 AIM OF POLICY

This policy is intended to set out values, principles underpinning the organisation's approach to communicating with young people in a professional setting. The aim is to ensure that all staff and young people are protected as much as possible from possible child protection issues that may arise from communicating through a range of mediums.

The goals of the organisation are to:

- Minimise the risk of abuse towards young people from a range of communications.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the way in which they communicate with young people and the effects this may have.

1.3 THE THREE LEVELS OF INTERVENTION

In order to implement this policy into practical ways to protect young people this policy has designed three different levels of intervention, which can be used to ensure the safety of both the workers and the young people. They are the following:

- General rules of good practice
- The traffic light system
- The text register

1.4 THE THREE LEVELS OF INTERVENTION

Here are seven general rules of good practice. These general rules are general guidelines that may be helpful to think about when looking at how professionals communicate with young people. They are the following:

1. Communicate with young people only in work hours.
2. Don't communicate with young people before 9 am or after 9 pm
3. Keep text messages you have given and received from young people if necessary.
4. Don't text or phone young people within school hours when they might be in a lesson.
5. If you have any concerns go and speak to another leader or member of the team.
6. Seek advice from others before taking action.
7. Seek to communicate face to face first whenever possible.

1.5 THE TRAFFIC LIGHT SYSTEM

One of the hardest things to do when looking at different forms of communication may be in discerning what constitutes as “risky communication”. To distinguish between communications that may pose a risk compared with communication that doesn’t. This policy has adopted the traffic light system; this is where different communication will be given a colour code according to its risk. This risk may be dependent upon two factors: Firstly its content and secondly the reoccurrence of the communication.

Green

Communication would be given a green colour code if it were low risk. Low risk would be the following: general information such as times, dates and venues of upcoming events, which are clearly not open to misinterpretation. They will not be frequent or regular conversations, but would relate to the workers professional context. This type of communication is generally viewed as acceptable and appropriate.

Amber

Communication would be given an Amber colour code if it were a moderate risk. Moderate risk would be the following: communicating and dealing with young people’s personal issues which may not be particularly private such as: a row with friends/parents. Amber might include things that are open to misinterpretation and are worth recording but which are not considered serious (i.e. an ‘x’ at the end of a message). Amber would include an increased frequency of communication but not at an alarming level.

Red

Communication would be given a red colour code if the communication were high risk. High risk would be the following: inappropriate language of an abusive, aggressive or sexual nature. This communication could strongly be opened to misinterpretation. Red could also include messages that lead to fear for the young person's safety (i.e. communication about abuse, self harm, leaving home, etc)

The communication could be a high risk if it is frequently out of working hours or if it becomes a regular and frequent pattern. Communication of this sort will need to be addressed or challenged immediately when appropriate, and may result in getting other organisations involved such as social services or a child protection officer.

1.6 THE TEXT REGISTER

The text register is a register that has two main functions the first being, it allows workers to record the communication they have given and received from young people. Secondly it offers an element of accountability between workers for the way they are communicating with young people.

The text register will give the opportunity for the worker to record the details of the conversation. If the communication is green then the message doesn't need to be recorded in detail, it may just be recorded that the communication has taken place. If the communication is Amber an overview of the context of the conversation may be recorded. If the communication is red then it must be recorded word for word.

When possible another worker will be required to see all communication first hand for example a text message or e-mail can be shown to the other worker. This isn't possible with phone calls, yet another worker will still be required to see the details that have been written on the text register. Whenever any communication is written down on the text register another member of staff will need to check what is written and sign their name as well as the worker recording the information.

This register will also include the worker recording the content of the communication, the name of the young person, the date, their signature and another workers signature. Also any other relevant details on the register, which may be appropriate to record.