



# Interest Link Borders Online Safety and Social Media Policy

This policy provides guidance on how our organisation uses the internet and social media, and the procedures for doing so. It also outlines how we expect staff, volunteers and members of our organisation, to behave online.

As an organisation, we commit to implementing this policy and addressing any concerns quickly and within these guidelines.

**Group Guidelines are referred to in the policy: these are given to all members and volunteers and include:**

#### **“Photographs & videos**

We will ask for consent in advance for photographs or videos to be taken using Interest Link equipment. Members and volunteers may only take photographs or videos on their mobile phones in connection with group activities.

#### **Contact between group members outside group meetings**

As a general principle, contact between members and volunteers outside group meetings should be kept to a minimum. Sharing of phone numbers and email addresses should usually be avoided, as should contact on social networking sites.

This approach protects volunteers’ privacy, maintains confidentiality and avoids service users accidentally being introduced into online environments where they might be vulnerable.

#### **Mobile phones and other electronic devices**

We ask that members and volunteers only use their mobile phones during sessions to confirm transport arrangements or in connection with group activities.”

#### **Aims.**

The aims of our online safety policy are:

- To protect all involved with our organisation and who make use of technology (such as mobiles phones, games consoles and the internet) in the course of their participation.
- To provide staff and volunteers with policy and procedure information regarding online safety and inform them how to respond to incidents.
- To ensure our organisation 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 organisation will:

- Assess and manage the safety aspects – including what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour for staff, volunteers and members when using websites, social media such as Facebook, tiktok, Instagram, Twitter or Snapchat, apps and video conferencing platforms such as Zoom or Skype.
- Be aware of how staff, volunteers and members use social media both inside and outside of our setting.
- Ensure that we adhere to relevant legislation and good practice guidelines when using social media or video conferencing platforms.
- Provide training for the staff responsible for managing our organisation's online presence.
- 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.
  - Incorporating online bullying ('cyberbullying') in our anti-bullying policy.

## **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 2 members of staff will have access to each account and password.
- The account will be monitored by at least two designated members of staff in order to provide transparency.
- The designated staff managing our online presence will seek advice from our designated safeguarding lead to advise on safeguarding requirements.
- Designated staff will remove inappropriate posts by members, volunteers or staff, explaining why, and informing anyone who may be affected (as well as the carers of any members involved).
- We'll make sure members, carers and volunteers are aware of who manages our social media accounts and who to contact if they have any concerns about something that's happened online.
- On accounts only meant for internal communication, our account, page and event settings will be set to 'private' so that only invited members can see their content.
- Identifying details such as a member'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 and tone as an organisation.
- Carers will be asked to give their approval for us to communicate with the person they care for through social media, via video conferencing platforms or by any other means of communication.

- Carers will need to give permission for photographs or videos of the person they care for to be posted on social media.
- Video conferencing sessions will operate waiting rooms in order to maintain members' privacy and prevent exposure to inappropriate or harmful content by third parties.

#### **What we expect of our staff.**

- Staff should be aware of this policy and behave in accordance with it.
- Staff should seek the advice of the designated safeguarding lead if they have any concerns about the use of the internet or social media.
- Staff should not communicate with members via personal accounts.
- Staff should not 'friend' or 'follow' members or young volunteers (aged under 18) from personal accounts on social media, and maintain the same professional boundaries online as they would in person when using organisation accounts.
- Staff should make sure any content posted on public personal accounts is accurate and appropriate, as members may 'follow' them on social media.
- Rather than communicating with carers through personal social media accounts, staff should use an organisational account.
- Staff should avoid communicating with members via email or organisational social media outside of agreed hours.
- Emails or messages should maintain Interest Link's tone and be written in a professional manner. e.g. in the same way you would communicate with fellow professionals, avoiding kisses (X's) or using slang or inappropriate language.
- Staff should not delete any messages or communications sent to or from organisation accounts.
- Staff should undertake all online safety training offered and gain a basic knowledge of the platforms members use and how to report or remove inappropriate content online.
- Any concerns reported through social media should be dealt with in the same way as a face-to-face disclosure, according to our reporting procedures.
- A carer should be present or available during the delivery of any activities via video conferencing platforms at a members' home.
- Delivery of activities to members via video conferencing platforms should where possible be supported by an additional member of staff.
- Staff, volunteers and members must not engage in 'sexting' or send pictures to anyone that are obscene.

#### **What we expect of members and volunteers**

- Members and volunteers should be aware of this online safety policy and agree to its terms.
- We expect members' and volunteers' behaviour online to be consistent with the guidelines set out in our group guidelines
- Members and volunteers should follow the guidelines set out in our group guidelines on all digital devices, including smart phones, tablets and consoles.

### **What we expect of carers.**

- Carers should be aware of this online safety policy and agree to its terms.
- Carers should protect all members' privacy online and think carefully about what content they share about our activities online, where they share it and who they're sharing it with.

### **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 such as Whatsapp or Facebook Messenger), we'll take the following precautions to ensure members' safety:

- Where members live with parents or carers, staff will usually contact parents or carers rather than members to setup .
- Smartphone users should respect the private lives of others and not take or distribute pictures of other people if it could invade their privacy.
- Texts, emails or messages will primarily be used for communicating information rather than engaging in private conversation.
- If a member misinterprets such communication and tries to engage a staff member in inappropriate conversation, the member of staff will take the following steps:
  - End the conversation or stop replying.
  - Suggest discussing the subject further at the next practice or event.
  - Inform Interest Link's lead safeguarding officer in the interest of transparency.
  - If concerned about the member, provide contact details for Interest Link's designated safeguarding lead or appropriate agencies and report any concerns using Interest Link's reporting procedures.

### **Using mobile phones during activities**

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

- Make members aware of how and who to contact if there is an emergency or a change to previously agreed arrangements with Interest Link.
- Advise carers that it may not be possible to contact members during activities and provide a staff contact who will be reachable should there be an emergency.
- Explain to members how using mobile phones during activities has an impact on their safe awareness of their environment, and their level of participation and achievement.