



## New Roots Online Safety and Social Media Policy

### Introduction

This policy provides guidance on how New Roots 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 members of our organisation to behave online.

### Aims

#### **The aims of our online safety policy are:**

- To protect all children and young people involved with our organisation 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 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, New Roots will:**

- Understand the safety aspects including what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior for staff and children when using websites, social media apps and other forms of digital communication.
- Be aware that it does not 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, Snapchat and Instagram), we 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 disclosure that take place online or written into our reporting procedures
  - Incorporating online bullying (cyber-bullying) in our anti-bullying policy.
- Provide training for the person responsible for managing our organisations 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 three members of staff will have access to each account and password.
- The account will be monitored by a designated person, who will have been appointed by the New Roots management.
- 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 or staff, explaining why, and informing anyone who may be affected (as well as the parents of any children involved).
- Identifying details such as a child home address, school name or telephone number should not be posted on social media platforms.
- Any posts or correspondence will be consistent with our aims.
- We will 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 for us to 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 the 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 the 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 organisations online presence.
- Staff should not 'friend' or 'follow' children or young people from personal account 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 the New Root's account, profile or website.

- At least one other member of staff should be copied in to any emails of the children or young people.
- Staff should avoid communicating with children or young people by email outside of normal office hours.
- Email should be signed off in a professional manner, avoiding the use of emojis or symbols such as kisses ("X"s)
- Any disclosure 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.
- We expect children and young people's behavior online to be consistent with the guidelines set out in our Acceptable Use Statement. Children should follow the guidelines set out in our Acceptable Use Statement on all digital devices, 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 will take the following precautions to ensure 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.
- We will seek parental permission on each occasion we need to contact children or young people directly; the purpose for each contact will be clearly identified and agreed upon.
- A method of accountability will be arranged, such as copies of texts also being sent to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or to parents.
- Staff should have a separate organisation phone from the personal one for any contact with parents or young people.
- Text will be used for communicating information such as reminding children or young people about upcoming events, sessions and trips and not to engage in conversation.

- 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 session.
  - If concerned about the child or young person, provide contact details for the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

### **Using mobile phones during sessions or events**

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

- Make children aware of how and who to contact if there is an emergency or a change to previously agreed arrangements within the organisation.
- Inform parents of appropriate times they can contact children who are in sessions or away at retreats and discourage them from attempting contact outside of these times.
- Advise parents that it may not be possible to contact children during sessions and provide a contact within the organisation who will be reachable should there be an emergency.
- Explain to young people how using mobile phones during activities and sessions has an impact on the safe awareness of the environment, and the level of participation and achievement.

### **Use of other digital devices and programs**

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 TVs and whether an app, programme or website is used.

If any digital Devices are used as part of activities within the organisation:

- We expect children and young people to adhere to the guidelines around the online use and behavior set out in our Acceptable Use Statement.
- We will establish appropriate restrictions, more commonly known as 'parental controls', on any device provided to prevent miss use or harm

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

## **Further information for parents and carers on keeping children safe online**

The following websites provide information for organisations and parents about online safety to help them protect their children from harm:

- NSPCC/O2 Helpline: 0808 800 5002 / [www.o2.co.uk/help/nspcc/child](http://www.o2.co.uk/help/nspcc/child)
- Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP): [www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk)
- Childnet: [www.childnet.com](http://www.childnet.com)
- The UK Safer Internet Centre: [www.saferinternet.org.uk](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk)