**Embedding the Mobile & Social Media Guidance**

**Purpose**

This activity sheet has been developed to allow you to understand and implement the new guidance being launched on how we use mobile communications and social media in our practice with children, young people and their families. This is best completed as a group activity in a team meeting.

**How to use**

There are 4 parts to the proposed activity which should be used in order and with the accompanying information.

1. **Preparation** - Read the document in advance and make notes on any questions to bring to the session.
2. **Review** - Discuss the questions you have as a group, are you able to answer them or do you need to feed them back via your manager for clarity.
3. **Impact** - Consider what this guidance means for your team and individual practice and the impact of not following it. Can you share any examples of learning from experience? Use the headings in this document as guides, there are ideas and good practice included along with a case study from an ambassador. Use all of this to support your discussion.
4. **Planning** - Agree your next steps, what do you need to begin doing differently or stop doing to ensure you follow the new guidance. When will you come back to review this?

**Topics for Part 3 - Impact**

**1. Use of Mobile Phone as a positive engagement tool with a young person**

**Considerations:**

Use of video call for a young person you couldn’t visit, keeping in touch using text messages.

How mobile phone use and using social media platforms can inform and enhance assessments and case recording.

**Good Practice Examples:**

“Children are used to video calling and it’s not been new for them, this has allowed me to see a more natural side to family life”.

“I find whatsapp is an effective and accessible way to stay in touch with families, especially older children and young parents. Tends to be more informal and chatty which allows for a relaxed and personal way to communicate with families”.

***2.* Use of phone records on a child’s file**

**Considerations:**

How clear has recording been from text messaging, how has this helped as a reference point?

How often are positive examples of phone / test communication described or recorded?

**Good Practice Examples:**

“I tend to use screenshots of conversation and save these to the LL file so that exact words and turns of phrase can be recorded, otherwise I copy type them into case notes using children’s or parents exact words so that their views are recorded accurately”.

**3. Social worker being ‘stalked’ by not following guidance**

**Considerations:**

What information should a family know about you, what permissions do you have on social media. Any example of ‘stalking’ behaviour.

How informed or confident are you about phone security settings and the national professional standards regarding professional / private conduct?

***Good Practice Examples:***

“I purposefully keep all of my personal social media settings locked right down so I am not google-able. There is some personal information I choose to share with families who I work with but this is carefully and relevantly shared by me and not through social media”.

**4. Young Person not using social media appropriately**

**Considerations:**

Who are they talking to, what are the risks associated.

Are you able to identify the possible risks and to engage positively in conversations planning with children, families, carers and partner agencies to address these – what additional support or training might you need?

**Good Practice Examples:**

Ambassador 1: “Can Foster Carers access young peoples phones?. Some young people are not allowed internet, or a phone. Monitoring young peoples phones is really difficult’. Parental controls can be added”. – What does this tell us about the challenges faced.

Ambassador 2: “When I was in care, I was not allowed on certain websites, the Wifi was turned off at 10 pm and back on at 7am’”. – How could this impact a young person?

**5. Data breach when not following guidance and impact of this**

**Considerations:**

What could happen if you are conducting council business from a personal device or giving out personal number or email?

**6. Misuse of social media to gain advantage on a family or young person**

**Considerations:**

How is this an invasion of privacy, what could the impact be on your registration status.

Are you informed and confident about the national and local expectations about professional conduct?

**Good Practice Examples:**

Ambassador 3: “Young people want their social workers as far away from their Facebook accounts as possible…we wouldn’t send them a friend request. Social Workers should not be able to access your Facebook, it is an invasion of privacy”.

Ambassador 4 “‘If a social worker was looking on a parents Facebook and saw, for example a photo of a 9 year old with a glass of wine in their hand, why should they have the right to use this as evidence. This maybe just a joke! Social workers shouldn’t invade parents’ privacy. Social Workers should not look at parents or young people’s Facebook pages”.

**Case Study Example**

**(Ambassador): My experience of support whilst in lockdown**

Since being in lockdown the support I have received has been so much better than before. Many things have worked for the better for me.

I have been able to get hold of my worker much quicker. I have felt confident when I text that I’ll be getting a response quickly, whereas before you would have to go via many different channels to get hold of your worker;, ringing the office, emailing or texting. Where as now for me it’s been much easier to WhatsApp and I’ve always got such a quick response!! I have also had decisions made so much quicker, from having money when I needed it literally being put on a bank card for me the same day has been great. I was told that she just had to get her manager to confirm it and then I had it the very day. Where as before we would have to go down the office, sign for the money, all whilst actually getting the decision to allow me to have the money took weeks by the time all the paperwork had been filled in. Now I know all she did was email and got a quick response. This has been so good for me and I actually feel more like I am trusted with money, you almost feel like social services don’t trust you when they make sure you sign for the money, if you want to buy food with it you don’t get money you get vouchers, just to make sure you will actually spend it on that. It’s been great.

I have also been able to do my pathway plan on call to my worker, this has been so much easier than having to meet and arrange a time especially when I’m always either at work or was at college. Plus I didn’t really ever need to go in the office to complete it when I would have been happy months ago to do it on the phone. I do feel like if I had said before can we do my pathway plan on the phone, I would have been told no, that we must meet up and do It. I think the value of my pathway plan now to me is much more, I actually was comfortable to say exactly what I wanted to without being embarrassed. I never saw how the pathway plan would ever help me, actually being able to be honest has made me realise just how useful it is for me. I feel like it has forced everyone to work differently. From being an ambassador we know that every worker of the council we had ever met would agree that not one way of working suits everyone. But did we really do anything to change that? Or did we just acknowledge that fact? I feel like it forced a change of working style that we wanted for ages, I know as ambassadors would encourage more use of technology such as using the mind of my own app, we would try and help as many people as we could who wasn’t so confident with technology, but we wouldn’t ever get those workers to maintain using the app, where as now are numbers are increasing.

I have also received really good support from both my leaving care worker and housing advisor; it’s been great having a WhatsApp group chat. This I wouldn’t have ever imagined. Wow how much easier it has been just to type one message in one chat and them both see it. It’s so much easier than sending numerous emails. We’ve all been able to clarify things much easier, it’s just made communication between us so much easier.

My leaving care worker has also offered to sit in on calls with my university if I need any help or advice, I just think that’s so much easier for me rather than having to arrange a meeting, all meet up and me feel different to every other uni student whilst I’m sat waiting for my meeting at uni. A phone call/ video call is much better for me to feel like I’m just a normal student going to uni now!

I have had many positive experiences of communication via mobile phones mostly since lockdown, before that it wasn’t great. I would hardly ever get a response from my worker; I felt that if I wanted to fill out a form by myself online it was a bit of a problem. However, since there hasn't been much alternative it’s actually been so much better. I have felt that I have been able to say things I want to say, if it wasn't via phone I wouldn't have said them as I would have been to embarrassed. I also feel a lot more comfortable speaking to them, its made us have a better relationship, my worker has replied so quickly, I have felt decisions have been made a lot more quicker for me as my worker was able to get hold of their manager easier to get that decision made. I think its a good way as most young people are so confident with technology, its made me feel like my worker is a bit more of a normal person. I have also felt that we have got things done a lot quicker, I don't have to go down the office, and I don't have to fill out unnecessary paperwork and waste time. I also think video calls for visits can be a lot more productive if a young person can say what they really feel, it breaks the ice actually speaking to a worker for the first time on a video call or call for when you actually meet them. I think its a better way of communicating with young people. You are on our level then. I also think it can help with young people’s anxiety, Anxiety of having to go out with their worker, anxiety of being in a public space with their worker. It can also be positive for young people to keep regular contact by messaging rather than every 6 weeks just once seeing that young person. I think it’s a lot more convenient for young people and quicker. It takes seconds for a lot of young people to type what would take ages for a young person to right.

You can also share pictures with your worker of good things that you are doing, another communication tool just like mind of my own. We need to normalise technology in social work then it might not be so alien when we suggest things like mind of my own. I felt when communicating with my worker on my phone it wasn't so statutory social work, as in my worker turning up at my house with their badge on, with their paperwork, with their 6 weekly questions. I felt like they became human, that I know my worker as a person now a lot more than I did because communicating via phone allowed that to happen