Birmingham Child Contact Centre

Social Media Policy, Procedures and Guidance

Introduction

It is the responsibility of Birmingham Child Contact Centre (BCCC) to ensure its volunteers are suitable to work with children and young people; providing not only a high standard of care but also setting an example as role models.

Social networking sites (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Tumblr, internet forums and message boards etc.) are a popular way for adults and children to communicate and they provide an opportunity for users to share information with existing friends and finding new friends with shared interests.

BCCC understands that some volunteers may wish to participate in social networking in their personal lives (this means family and friends and not anyone involved in BCCC), however, they should also be aware of the potential risks involved in the use of this type of media and be mindful of the information they post and how it might be viewed when published, together with the potential impact on their reputation and by association the Contact Centre. BCCC has a responsibility to offer advice and guidance to protect volunteers and families from publishing anything that might reflect badly on them.

BCCC has a duty to safeguard children and young people in their care. Any volunteer associated with BCCC is expected to behave appropriately and in ways that are consistent with BCCC's values and policies.

Purpose

BCCC has a responsibility to ensure that the children and young people in its care are protected from potential harm or abuse via the internet.

This policy seeks to protect the interests of volunteers, families, children and BCCC. It applies to the use of all internet- based social networking sites of any kind on which users may publish either personal or work–related information.

Process
Volunteers

Social media checks may be undertaken by BCCC in relation to a volunteer, this will be done in line with the Volunteers Policy, The Volunteers Application Form permits assessors to undertake checks on applicants using search engines, e.g. Google, Bing etc. The implications of internet use will be made explicit from the start of the volunteer process. There is information in the public domain about how to configure appropriate privacy settings. Volunteers should understand that they need to maintain their own confidentiality.

Checking social media sites

Social media checks will be undertaken by either the Volunteers & Families Coordinator and/or a member of the Management Committee who will enter the volunteer's name into a search engine using their own account. Checks for applicants will be undertaken during Stage 1 of the volunteer recruitment process. Checks will only reveal profiles, photos, videos and comments that are in the public domain and only when security settings have not been correctly set up by the volunteer. Volunteers will not be requested to provide any personal passwords as these are not publicly available.

Any information revealed in such a check which is a cause for concern, will be discussed with the volunteer at the first available opportunity. Causes for concern might include any inappropriate material whether in video, photo or written form, including views and opinions, whether implicit or explicit, that are not conducive to the role of a volunteer at Birmingham Child Contact Centre. The information might have been published by the volunteer or a third party.

In all cases interviewers will have to consider the source of the material and make a judgement on how it should be interrogated and acted upon. If there is a cause for concern this will be shared with the Management Committee.

Potential risks involved in the use of social media

- Social media sites can also provide opportunities for the sexual exploitation and grooming of children and young people where gifts or rewards may lead to meeting a potential abuser offline.
- Volunteers may pass information to either family members or strangers through social media sites which might lead to harm.

Good Practice

- Go online and check your security and confidentiality settings. Reset them if necessary.
- Consider the consequences before posting anything on social networking sites and the impression it may give of you to those who access the information.
- If you identify yourself as being associated with BCCC you should only create content that is consistent with professional standards and within BCCC's policies.
- You should be mindful to make clear that any views posted are your own and not those of BCCC and make sure that any comments you make do not bring the Contact Centre into disrepute.
- Confidentiality – matters relating to the Charity, it's children and families should never be discussed or referred to on social networks.
- Social media sites should not be used to abuse or harass anyone or to post offensive or derogatory comments. Remember that you are personally responsible for any comments you post.
- Volunteers, carefully consider adding children and young people as friends on their social media profile and before doing so discuss with their parents or guardians
- Adding a young person as a 'friend' means you can assess/monitor some of what they may post, but it also means they may access your information, which again could lead to difficulties such as a complaint if anyone posts anything inappropriate on your wall/page.
- In order to maintain appropriate professional boundaries volunteers should not be 'friends' with BCCC families on social media websites.

Security

- It is advisable that anyone using social networking facilities do all they can to limit access to their posts and that maximum privacy settings are in place which are reviewed on a regular basis.
- Volunteers and should be advised never to give out personal details or information which could identify them or their location.
- Information and photographs of a BCCC family must never be posted by volunteers on social media sites without the written consent of the family and the child, if of an appropriate age. As once an image is on the internet it can be viewed and stored by other people within their friends' network.
- Volunteers who use social media sites should keep any Contact Centre information hidden and vet carefully any requests to become a friend.
- Volunteers must never identify a child at BCCC and only discuss their role as a volunteer in a general way that does not identify children.
- Children and young people should be encouraged to report any inappropriate use or comments in confidence.

Any breaches of confidentiality or the publication of material that is a cause for concern may affect a volunteer's assessment, approval status and length of service.

The contents of this document should be considered in conjunction with all relevant Policies/Guidance issued by BCCC, e.g. Safeguarding and Privacy Policies.

Since technology is constantly changing it is impossible to cover all circumstances in this guidance. Individuals are expected to behave online with the same respect for others as they would in any other aspect of life.

Legal considerations

- **The Human Rights Act 1998** gives a 'right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence'.
- **The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000** covers the extent to which organisations can monitor or record communications at the point at which they enter or are being sent within volunteer's telecommunications system. It applies to public and private communication networks. It gives the sender or recipient of a communication the right of action for damages against an organisation for the unlawful interception of communications. These are two areas where monitoring is not unlawful:

‣ Where the organisation reasonably believes that the sender and intended recipient have consented to the interception;

‣ Without consent, the organisation may monitor in certain circumstances – for example, to prevent crime, protect the business or to comply with financial regulations.

- **The Data Protection Act 1988** covers how information about job/volunteer applicants can be collected, handled and used.