



Digital Communication and Social Media

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Purpose of this policy

This policy outlines how staff and mentors should communicate digitally and use social media when working with or representing MENT4. It is designed to ensure communication remains safe, professional and appropriate, particularly when engaging with young people.

Digital communication is a key part of modern youth work, but it also carries risks. Clear boundaries must be maintained at all times.

General principles

All digital communication must be:

- professional
- appropriate
- transparent
- safe
- in line with safeguarding procedures

Staff should always assume that any message could be shared, reviewed or used as part of a safeguarding or professional process.

Approved communication channels

Staff must use MENT4 approved communication methods when contacting young people. These may include:

- work phones or approved contact numbers
- agreed messaging platforms
- school or partner communication systems
- approved email accounts

Personal contact details must not be shared unless explicitly approved.

Communication with young people

When communicating with young people, staff must:

- keep communication appropriate and relevant
- maintain clear professional boundaries
- avoid excessive or unnecessary contact
- communicate within reasonable hours
- avoid informal or overly personal language
- avoid private or secretive conversations
- ensure communication can be accounted for if needed

Mentors should not become a young person's primary or constant point of contact outside structured sessions.

Response times and availability

Staff are not expected to be available at all times.

Staff should:

- communicate within agreed working hours
- set clear expectations around availability
- avoid responding late at night or during personal time unless necessary and appropriate
- protect their own wellbeing and boundaries

If a young person sends messages outside agreed hours, staff should respond at an appropriate time unless there is a safeguarding concern.

Safeguarding in digital communication

If a young person shares something concerning through a message or online platform, staff must:

- take it seriously
- avoid attempting to manage the situation alone
- record the communication
- report the concern to the Designated Safeguarding Lead
- follow safeguarding procedures

Staff must never ignore or delay responding to safeguarding concerns raised digitally.

Social media boundaries

Staff must maintain clear boundaries between their personal and professional online presence.

Staff must not:

- add or accept young people on personal social media accounts
- follow or engage with young people's personal profiles

- send direct messages through personal platforms
- interact with young people's content (likes, comments, shares)
- allow personal accounts to be used for mentoring communication

Where MENT4 uses official social media accounts, engagement must be appropriate, monitored and in line with consent and safeguarding policies.

Representing MENT4 online

When posting online, staff must consider how their behaviour reflects on MENT4.

Staff must not:

- post content that could damage MENT4's reputation
- share confidential or sensitive information
- post images or information about young people without consent
- engage in abusive, discriminatory or inappropriate behaviour
- present personal views as if they represent MENT4

Even on personal accounts, staff should be mindful that their role may be visible.

Use of devices

Staff should use devices responsibly when working with young people.

This includes:

- not using personal devices inappropriately during sessions
- not showing inappropriate content
- protecting passwords and access to systems
- avoiding storing sensitive information on personal devices
- using secure systems where possible

Group chats and messaging groups

Where group chats are used, they must be:

- approved by MENT4
- used for clear and appropriate purposes
- monitored where necessary
- professional in tone
- free from inappropriate content

Staff must not create informal or unapproved group chats with young people.

Photos, videos and content sharing

Photos, videos or recordings involving young people must only be taken, stored and shared in line with MENT4's consent and media policies.

Staff must not:

- take photos without appropriate consent
- store images on personal devices unless approved
- share content through personal accounts
- send images or videos to individuals outside approved processes

Managing inappropriate contact

If a young person sends inappropriate messages or content, staff should:

- not engage in the behaviour
- maintain professional boundaries
- record the communication
- report the issue to a line manager or safeguarding lead
- follow safeguarding procedures where necessary

Breaches of this policy

Any misuse of digital communication or social media may be treated as a serious matter.

This may include:

- inappropriate contact with young people
- sharing confidential information
- engaging in unsafe or unprofessional behaviour
- failure to follow communication boundaries

Serious breaches may result in disciplinary action.

Final note

Digital communication can support strong mentoring relationships when used correctly. However, it must always be safe, professional and appropriate.

Clear boundaries protect young people, protect staff and help MENT4 maintain trust in the work we do.

This document has been approved by:

Luke Peters
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A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to be "Luke Peters".

Helping young people discover what they are MENT4

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