

**Central Bedfordshire Council's  
Children's Homes Policy Statement:  
Use of Mobile Device Policy.**

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## Introduction:

Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) and our Children's Homes management team recognise the need to ensure staff are provided with a safe and healthy working environment. Mobile telephones are an excellent resource and bring a range of benefits to our day-to-day work, however they also present a number of risks. This policy identifies what measures are in place to manage these risks and ensure that mobile telephones are used safely throughout CBC.

The development in technology means that mobile telephones are no longer used just for telephone calls and text messages, most function as tablets allowing them to be used as mini computers, allowing individuals to access the internet, use applications, send e-mails, make recordings, take pictures and access a range of online platforms.

Whilst the benefits of mobile telephones are vast and there has been a huge increase in both business and domestic use, they have also introduced risks of their own.

### 1. Risks:

1.1 Ready accessibility to high-quality cameras — which in a safeguarding context in social care means they can potentially be used to take and share inappropriate images.

1.2 Security vulnerabilities, e.g., viruses / data breaches.

1.3 Distraction from work — staff spending time on their telephones or on social media rather than working, not focussing on tasks or supervision of children and young people.

1.4 The inappropriate or illegal use of telephones while driving.

1.5 Breaching confidentiality and the law including:

- Data Protection Act
- GDPR Regulations
- Health and Safety at Work Act
- Road Traffic Act

### 2. Legal Requirements:

2.1 CBC and the Children's Homes management teams recognise its duty to ensure the safety of its staff and children in-line with its registration requirements and responsibilities and to comply with applicable health and safety laws. This includes ensuring the safety of staff when working off-site and when working alone.

### 3. Policies Concerning the Use of Mobile Telephones:

3.1 The three Council Children's Homes have developed a policy/guidance regarding mobile telephone use. It acknowledges that there is a distinction between telephones which the organisation may provide for work purposes and the use of personal telephones during working hours. The Children's Homes issue staff with work mobile telephones to use whilst on shift.

3.2 Along with approval from the Registered manager it is CBC's decision when a work telephone is provided to staff. When allocated, guidance for its appropriate use is set out in CBC'S IT Acceptable use policy:

<https://centralbedfordshire.app.box.com/s/554pqb98kpf9wuqgsn46wtgv5lth5r7z>

#### **4. Work telephones:**

4.1 Children's Homes support staff have access to unit mobile telephones for use in the course of their duties. Work mobile telephones can be taken off site by staff supporting children and young people on community-based activities. In addition, the telephone can be used by staff if there is a need to contact families, take photographs or videos, undertaking internet searches for activities, sending work related messages and/or e-mails.

4.2 A mobile telephone will be provided for security reasons for any staff member working off-site, for example, escorting a child, driving the service vehicle and carrying out work related visits.

4.3 Staff who use the unit mobile telephones in the course of their work must ensure the security of the telephone at all times. The passcode should not be shared with anyone outside of the service. They must record and notify staff on shift and/or a member of the management team if they are taking the telephone out of the building. It must be returned promptly to the unit when staff have completed their visit/task away from the home. The unit telephone must always be returned before the end of a shift.

4.4 Under no circumstances should the unit mobile telephones be used while driving the services vehicle or while driving a private vehicle on CBC/Children's Home 'business', this includes use of hands-free systems.

4.5 The loss or theft of the unit mobile telephone must be reported immediately to the Home manager or deputy manager.

4.6 Staff should be aware that mobile telephones issued for work purposes will be monitored, including calls made, data use and internet sites visited. The telephone may be monitored by the CBC IT team at any time.

4.7 Viewing inappropriate websites is one form of misuse, as is sending or opening inappropriate emails or images. In no circumstances should staff access inappropriate websites, for example, those that could be considered pornographic, racist, sexist or otherwise offensive. Evidence of visits to such sites, the downloading of materials from such sites and the use of inappropriate search criteria will be treated as a disciplinary matter and will be handled in accordance with CBC's [Disciplinary Policy & Procedure](#).

4.8 Staff should not send or circulate e-mails, texts or photographs which are offensive or could be perceived as offensive. These could constitute cyberbullying, harassment or even be a safeguarding issue.

4.9 Use of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter raise network security, disciplinary and performance concerns. Staff must not use social networking sites when using the unit telephone.

4.10 Staff should report any suspicious activity on mobile telephone networks, such as suspicious emails, spam mail, etc. that is received, to a manager.

## **5. Personal telephones:**

5.1 Staff are permitted to bring their own mobile telephones to work but these should be switched to silent and left with other staff belongings in the staff room/office. Members of staff should not have their personal mobile telephone with them whilst on shift, they can access them during official or 'comfort' breaks. This will be closely monitored and if individuals are seen to be checking telephones frequently this may be raised as a matter for disciplinary investigation and will be handled in accordance with CBC's [Disciplinary Policy & Procedure](#).

5.2 Personal telephones should not be used for making calls, texting, accessing the internet, social media/networking or playing games during working hours.

5.3 If staff have outside commitments that may mean they need to be contacted for urgent reasons whilst at work, individuals should make the staff member(s) that they are working with aware at the start of the shift. Staff should provide the land line number for the service to family members who may need to contact them in an emergency whilst they are working.

5.4 Staff should never use their personal telephones to take pictures of the children that CBC and their Children's Homes support. Where photographs of children are required to be taken this should be done with devices supplied by CBC/the Children's Homes. Photos should be transferred to the child/young person's Box file at the earliest convenience and deleted from the devices.

5.5 Children being supported at the Children's Home should never be included in any staff member's personal calls, messaging, or video calls.

5.6 Staff must not use social networking sites such as Facebook on their personal telephones while at work. When they do use such sites outside of work time, they should refrain from discussing or commenting on work related issues. Such behaviour is unprofessional and can lead to breaches of confidentiality or trust. For further details please see CBC Guide for employees using social media:

<https://centralbedfordshire.app.box.com/s/8grw7hgmhsnz6eqhymaivu802mrt4die>

5.7 The registered manager will monitor personal telephone use and breach of the rules set out above could lead to disciplinary action. The registered manager acknowledges that there may be occasions when they or a member of the management team may need to share information or follow up on shift related issues. When appropriate this will be sent to staff's personal mobile telephone. There is no expectation that a response will need to be immediate so messages can be picked up at an appropriate time as identified above. For urgent/important communication the manager or deputy will call the unit telephone.

## **6. Mobile telephones and driving:**

6.1 In accordance with Government legislation, it is illegal for drivers of any vehicle to use mobile telephone or satellite navigation while in control of a vehicle. This includes periods when stopped at traffic lights, queuing in traffic and supervising a learner driver. Use of a suitable hands-free device is acceptable in law but a driver may still be at risk of prosecution for failing to have proper

control of a vehicle if they use such a device when driving. If there is an incident, the use of any telephone or similar device could result in charges of careless or dangerous driving.

6.2 For this reason, the Children's Home's policy for the use of mobile telephones is that staff must not use a mobile telephone (hand-held or hands-free) while driving any vehicle that is under their control on Children Home business / being used to transport children.

6.3 It is recommended that all telephones be set to silent and voicemail while driving to allow messages to be left if necessary and avoid the telephone distracting the driver.

## **7. Personal iPads / Tablets / Laptops:**

7.1 The Children's Homes strongly discourages staff from bringing personal devices, such as laptops, iPads or tablets into work (and such devices can only be brought into the premises with prior agreement from the Manager as set out in the Council's Code of Contact). If staff do bring them into work, they do so at their own risk and CBC/the Children's Homes will not accept any responsibility for loss or damage to such devices.

7.2 Personal iPads/tablets/laptops should not be used to complete any work-related tasks. The service has an adequate number of laptops available for staff use. Please speak to your manager if you need IT equipment. These devices must be used in accordance with CBC's IT Acceptable use policy.

## **8. Smart watches / 'Fit bits':**

8.1 Smart watches are now widely available. Staff are discouraged from wearing these devices during their shift to reduce the risk of staff being distracted by calls/messages/alerts. If they are worn staff must turn off all notifications and any recording/picture taking functions during their shift, such as by turning the watch to 'airplane mode'. Staff are discouraged from wearing these devices during their shift to reduce the risk of the above and prevent any safeguarding breaches due to them having similar functions to mobile telephones.

## **9. Review**

This policy will be subject to regular review by the management team from each of the Central Bedfordshire Council Children's Homes.

# **Central Bedfordshire in contact**

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