



Free2B Alliance

Digital Communications Policy V1

Version: 1

Date: 27/2/2021

Authorised: Board of Directors

NEXT REVIEW DUE:

Next review period in 3 years – February 2024

Unless an earlier review is triggered by any of the following changes:

- There are changes to operating environment / or strategic direction of the company
- Work behaviour issues that require clarification
- Changes to government policy or legislation

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1. Introduction

This policy clarifies the role of Free2B as an organisation and of Free2B staff, volunteers and members

2. Scope of the policy

The purpose of this Digital Communications Policy is to enable Free2B to:

- Follow good practice
- Protect Free2B members, staff, volunteers, supporters and other individuals

The Digital Communications lead for Free2B is: Lucie Brooke (Director)

It is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers to read and adhere to the Digital Communication Policy. Failure to adhere to the policy may result in disciplinary action.

3. Definitions

Digital communications refers to wide range of technologies including:

- Emails
- Text and instant messaging systems such as WhatsApp
- Phone calls including video call technology
- Online meeting platforms such as Zoom
- Social media networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter

4. Communicating with members

Members are defined as any individual accessing our youth or parent support services.

Free2B recognises digital communication is an important part of the lives of our members. We understand that for many young people in particular, using the Internet is a regular part of their lives and has a significant impact on their social development. In accordance with Free2B's Safeguarding Policy, we recognise that we must take all possible steps to protect young people & vulnerable adults from significant harm or risk whilst using the Internet or any other form of technology. We also recognise the importance of establishing and updating procedures to ensure workers are protected whilst they work with members.

All workers are responsible for reading Free2B policies produced regarding safeguarding and communication matters and are expected to adhere to the guidelines in the current policies.

5. Reasons for contacting members using digital communications

Digital communications are an important tool for staff to provide support to our youth adult members. Whilst face-to-face contact is encouraged, we recognise that for many of our young people who are not 'out' at home (regarding their sexuality &/or gender) face-to-face appointments may not be safe or viable - with

digital communications often the safest method of communication.
Digital communications can be used for the provision of our 1:1 support service and to provide group information (such as announcing a youth group event).

This policy relates specially to Free2B staff with roles providing member support. Free2B volunteers should not make contact with our members via digital communication methods, unless a specific project remit has been approved and appropriate resources have been provided (for example a Free2B phone / email account).

6. Guidance for workers

6.1 Workers should only use digital communication methods for reasons relating to work with youth and adult members.

- It is not permitted for workers to have private non-work related contact in the form of digital communication with youth and adult members.
- It is not permitted for workers to give youth or adult members their personal phone number or email address
- It is not permitted for workers to give youth or adult members their personal social media contacts
- With regards to members who have left the Free2B service, the policy remains relevant for young people aged under 18. For individuals 18+ seek advice from your line manager.

6.2 Safeguarding disclosures

If a member discloses information or anything of a concerning matter arises via written communication (text, email etc), the following procedure must be followed:

- Read and follow the Free2B Safeguarding Procedures relating to disclosures.
- Make attempts to contact the member via other direct methods of communication (phone/video call etc) and where possible, arrange to meet face-to-face if necessary.

6.3 Language

All language should be appropriate and where relevant 'standard responses' should be used (e.g. if you have sent an email out containing event details and receive a reply asking for further details, create a standard response with additional details so that all young people receive the same information).

Workers should take great care over the language used to reduce the risk of misinterpretation. When sending emails, workers should avoid informal language such as shorthand or 'text language' as this can often be misunderstood and lead to further complications.

6.4 Hours of communication

When using digital communication with youth and adult members (within the guidelines above), they should take place within the worker's normal working

hours. If a project takes place outside of normal working hours and it is necessary to use digital communications, workers should seek advice from their line manager.

6.5 Social media guidelines

Workers should only use the official Free2B social media accounts for contact with youth and adult members with whom they are working.

- It is not permitted for workers to add youth or adult members on their personal social networking sites who are part of Free2B (including those over the age of 18).
- It is not permitted for workers to use their personal social networking or instant messaging accounts for contact with youth or adult members.
- Workers should seek to ensure that their personal profiles on any social networking sites should be set to the highest form of security to avoid members accessing personal information or seeing any pictures of a personal nature.
- If a young person or adult member attempts to connect with a worker or volunteer via their personal social media account the following procedures should take place:
 - there should be no response to the client contact
 - the incident should be reported immediately to their line manager in order to follow up with the client
 - the individual should review their social media settings

7. HR Procedures

Following the termination or suspension of a Free2B role, the Digital Communications Lead will immediately remove all digital access via the following actions:

- Retrieval of Free2B digital equipment (e.g. phone, laptop etc)
- Changing all relevant passwords
- Closure of all relevant digital accounts (e.g. email etc)

8. Cyber bullying and the law

Most people use mobile phones and the Internet appropriately. However, when technology is abused there may be legal consequences. We will put disciplinary procedures in place and if necessary, ask for the person bullying (whether that be a staff member, volunteer, young person or adult member) to leave the organisation and not to attend our activities and events.

Please see the Free2B Anti-Bullying Policy for further information.

9. Young people and E-safety

Free2B does not provide any digital equipment to young people as part of our youth service.

Equipment within the youth club room (smart TV and PC/projector) is only available with staff/volunteer control.

As part of the Free2B commitment to safeguarding, e-safety is included within the youth club annual curriculum.

For useful resources and support material to use with parents and carers, volunteers and children and young people visit:

www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/

www.thinkuknow.org.uk

10. Monitoring social media

- Free2B staff are responsible for setting up, managing and moderating (overseeing/reviewing/responding to posted content) Free2B web and social media pages. The staff will oversee the content that will appear, will decide which links to other sites to accept, and will have online contact with youth and parent members who interact with the Free2B online content. We keep records of our activities on social media.
- We apply the same level of recording of online activities as we do in face-to-face work. Our pages are monitored as a minimum removing any content that is inappropriate.
- In line with our values, Free2B will NOT respond to offensive social media comments and where appropriate such comments will be reported via the relevant social media platform reporting systems.

11. Addressing the media

If there is an instance where Free2B are contacted by the media about issues that have been reported in the news or a young person has been involved in something that has brought media attention, as an organisation we positively promote young people and always aim to protect them. This includes how they are represented in the media and within the community.

The board of directors will review and handle all press enquiries and will give statements accordingly.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the:

- Free2B Safeguarding Policy
- Free2B Anti-bullying Policy