

Digital Youth Work Good Practice Guidelines



As a result of Government advice and guidance concerning COVID-19, CDYSB is responding in numerous ways to support youth funded organisation during these exceptional times. As many projects and services are making use of technology and digital youth work, CDYSB has put together these Good Practice Guidelines to assist you in creating safer online spaces.

Consent

- The digital age of consent in Ireland is 16.
- Workers engaging with young people online should get consent from parents/guardians.
- Consent can be obtained through text message, email or WhatsApp and kept as evidence of permission.
- Parents/guardians should be notified of the times and days planned for online groups/activities.

GDPR

- Ensure online practice is in line with the projects Data Protection Policy and Data Retention Policy.
- Workers should not share personal or revealing information i.e. passwords/phone number/home address on social media sites.
- Workers should not ask young people to share or tag any personal information on social media sites.
- Projects should review current software such as fire walls, virus protection product and monitoring packages ensuring they are up to date and are not breached.
- Sessions must not be audio/video recorded in compliance with Data Protection.

Safety

- Workers should choose the safest and most appropriate settings on each social media site or app and consider the appropriateness of each platform from a safeguarding point of view.
- Workers should ensure that they are in an appropriate space to host a group or activity, such as with a plain background that preserves their privacy.
- There should always be more than one worker involved in each online group or activity.

- Workers should notify their line-managers of plans to have online groups or activities with a young person/young people.
- The numbers of young people who are participating should be kept small, for example 6 – 8 young people.
- Workers should ensure that when the group/activity has finished, all young people are disconnected from the server and cannot continue to meet without the workers.

Social Media Accounts

- Workers should only use their organisation's social media accounts to communicate with young people, rather than their personal accounts, to maintain separation from their personal online presence.
- A named worker/s should moderate the content of all social media sites, monitoring posts, live comments, removing inappropriate content and liaising with their line manager on any instances of bullying or harassment.

Contract with young people

- Young people should be involved in drawing a contract for their group, focusing on the app or site they will be using for their group/activity.
- This is also a good opportunity for a discussion on their general safety while on the internet.

Reporting

- A system for reporting any concerns that may arise from using the internet in the project should be agreed.
- If there is a suspicion of any illegal or criminal activity being perpetrated by the use of the internet in your organisation, this should be reported to the statutory authorities without delay and managed in line with an organisation's policies and procedures.
- If a worker notes any Child Protection concerns while online working with young people, they should adhere to the guidelines and reporting procedures as per their organisation and/or statutory reporting requirements.

Recording Work

- Workers should continue to plan, evaluate and keep a record of groups/activities as agreed with their line manager.
- Workers should record all individual interactions/or attempted interactions they have with young people.
- Workers should also record the impact of this crisis on their services for future reporting.