

# The Access Project Remote Communication with Students Policy

**Date: August 2024**

**Review Date: August 2025**

*The Access Project is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all adults within The Access Project to share this commitment.*

## **Introduction**

At The Access Project, communicating with the students on the programme is an important aspect in ensuring their engagement with the project and achieving the best outcomes. It is vital therefore that adults communicating with students do so in a way that keeps themselves as well as the students as safe as possible.

This policy relates to remote communication between adults and students on The Access Project. It explains our expectations and guidelines on how to keep the same boundaries and follow the same safeguarding practice as in the physical, offline world.

## **Scope**

The topics covered in this policy are:

- Acceptable methods of communication with students
- Conducting sessions with students and use of technology to communicate
- Language and content of messages
- Hours of communication
- Social media
- Communication guidelines once a student leaves the programme
- Reporting concerns

The communication methods referred to include online communication such as email, social media interactions and communication via The Access Project's designated online platform "The Access Hub", and telephone communication such as phone calls and SMS text.

This document applies to anyone who works for and volunteers with The Access Project, including employees, volunteers, agency workers, interns, and contractors.

Please also refer to our Code of Conduct within the [Safeguarding Children Policy](#) for further information on communicating face to face with students.

## Acceptable methods of communication

### Volunteers/ Group Tutors

Volunteers/ Group Tutors and students working online can **only** communicate with each other through The Access Project's designated online tutorial platform unless otherwise agreed. The account should have a strong password, and it is not to be shared with anyone beyond the named Volunteer/ Group Tutor. If Volunteers/ Group Tutors have any difficulties with this communication, they should speak to their contact at The Access Project for advice.

Under no circumstances should contact details be exchanged between students and volunteers/ group tutors directly without direction from The Access Project staff. Furthermore, students and volunteers/ group tutors should not arrange to meet face to face without prior agreement from The Access Project.

For Volunteers working face to face with students, remote communication should only occur via email with the student's University Access Officer cc'd into correspondence. Should a student or volunteer be running late for a tutorial, brief communication via SMS text or phone call is permitted for logistical reasons.

### Staff members

For staff members working with students in schools, online communication should primarily be conducted via email, with staff using their work email address only. To ensure the effective running of the programme, there may be occasions where staff members are required to contact students quickly. In these instances, it is permissible

for staff members to contact students on their mobile phones, providing the following terms are adhered to:

- Staff members must only use their work phones for contacting students
- Contact via mobile phone should be brief and factual – phones must not be used as a means of relationship building
- To protect student data, the names of students must not be saved on work phones, and messages to students should not include any personal details
- Any messages should be sent via SMS text only.

## **Conducting sessions at The Access Project**

Sessions between Volunteers/ Group Tutors should be held online unless otherwise agreed.

### **Location of online sessions**

Online sessions should only be conducted via the online platform as directed by The Access Project, as all sessions conducted on this platform are recorded and monitored internally. Access to an adult's account on the online platform should only be available to the named account holder and should be password protected with a strong password.

Under no circumstances should sessions be conducted through another platform without direction from The Access Project staff, including, but not limited to, Zoom or Microsoft Teams. If Volunteers/ Group Tutors are having any difficulties with using the online platform, they should refer to the platform's troubleshooting guidance or speak to their contact at The Access Project.

For staff members, delivery of sessions with students should be conducted via the Access Project's designated platform, or organisational accounts of other video platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Personal accounts must not be used, and all online sessions should be recorded.

### **Sharing resources electronically**

Any resources shared with students online should be shared via the online platform and should be checked in advance by the adult posting to ensure they are appropriate for students. Any links to external resources should also be accessible for

members of staff at The Access Project.

Care should be taken to ensure that personal details, such as email addresses, are not shared via these resources. Should contact details be found to be shared or if the resource shared is deemed by staff at The Access Project to be inappropriate, we reserve the right to remove material, you may be asked to delete the related resource, and our internal disciplinary procedures may be followed.

## Language and content of electronic messages

It is not appropriate to have private contact with the young people we work with that is not related to The Access Project - this includes electronic communication. Messages between adults and students should not be used as a relationship-building tool but used only to communicate specific information - for example, times and dates of The Access Project sessions. Messages should remain brief and unambiguous.

When communicating with young people, it is important to take great care with the language used. Over-familiarity or language that could be misinterpreted or misconstrued should always be avoided, with a professional tone used throughout. Adults at The Access Project must not use language that is directly (or could be misinterpreted as being) racist, sexist, derogatory, threatening, abusive or sexualised in tone in any communication with a student.

## Hours of communication

When communicating with students outside of sessions (within the guidelines above) this should take place on weekdays in the daytime or early evening between 8am and 6pm, and up to 8pm for logistics purposes on the day a session is arranged for.

Adults must not contact students late in the evening, as this could be viewed as inappropriate.

If adults find that students are communicating at unsociable hours, they should make their contact at The Access Project or manager aware.

## Social media

Adults at The Access Project **must not** use their personal social networking or instant messaging accounts for contact with young people involved with The Access Project.

As an individual in a position of trust, you should not have any students from The Access Project as “friends” on social networking sites. Instead, encourage them to “follow”/ “like” The Access Project’s official [Facebook](#), [X](#), [LinkedIn](#), or [Instagram](#) pages. If a student adds you on any social media sites, please decline this invite and inform [stayingssafe@theaccessproject.org.uk](mailto:stayingssafe@theaccessproject.org.uk)

For more information, please read The Access Project’s Social Media Policy.

## **Communication guidance once a student leaves the programme**

Once a Volunteer/ Group tutor is no longer working with a student and once goodbyes have been said following a student receiving their final results, we recommend that communication between the two parties should cease. This is because The Access Project will no longer be able to monitor the communication between Volunteers/ Group tutors and students once they are no longer connected via the designated online platform.

Once a student is no longer on The Access Project, students may continue to receive organisational communication from staff members at The Access Project as an alumnus of the programme. We advise that communication with adult alumni should be professional in tone, only sent from work email addresses and not be used as a relationship building tool.

## **Reporting concerns and safeguarding students**

All adults at The Access Project have a duty of care towards their students. For any non-emergency queries, please speak to your contact at The Access Project or your manager.

Any safeguarding concerns about a student on The Access Project should be passed on to our Designated Child Protection Officer following our safeguarding procedures. Please refer to the Safeguarding Children Policy relating to this.

## **Safeguarding contacts**

Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO)

Name: Jennifer Guerin

Email: [stayingssafe@theaccessproject.org.uk](mailto:stayingssafe@theaccessproject.org.uk)

Phone number: 020 4513 5999 (option one for safeguarding)

NSPCC helpline: 0808 800 5000