Communication Guidelines for Volunteers

Last reviewed: January 2021
Date of next review: September 2021

The Access Project is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

These guidelines relate to electronic communication between volunteer tutors and students on The Access Project (TAP) and explain how to keep the same boundaries and follow the same safeguarding practice as in the physical, offline world.

Acceptable forms of communication

Tutors and students can communicate with each other via email (preferred method of communication), text, phone call or through TAP's designated online tutorial platform to arrange tutoring sessions. For tutors of students in Key Stage 4, communication should only take place through the online platform.

Conducting tutorials online

- Tutorials should only be conducted via the online platform as directed by TAP, as all tutorials conducted on this platform are recorded and monitored internally.
- Under no circumstances should tutorials be conducted through another platform, including but not limited to Zoom or MS Teams.
- If tutors are having any difficulties with using the online platform, they should refer to the platform's troubleshooting guidance or contact their University Access Officer (UAO).

Social Media

- For the purpose of this policy, social media is defined as websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. This includes, but is not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Facetime, Instagram, Whatsapp, iMessage and Skype.
- Volunteers must not use their personal social networking or instant messaging accounts for contact with young people involved with TAP.
- As an individual in a position of trust, you should not have any TAP students as "friends" on social networking sites. Instead, encourage them to "follow"/"like" TAP's official Twitter/LinkedIn/Instagram pages.
- If a student adds you on any social media sites, please decline this invite and inform your UAO at the earliest opportunity.

Language and content of emails/text messages

- It is not appropriate to have private non-TAP related contact with the young people we work with - this includes electronic communication.
- When communicating with young people, it is important to take great care over the language used. Over-familiarity or language that could be misinterpreted or misconstrued should be avoided at all times.
- When sending emails, both parties should not use informal language as this can be misunderstood and lead to further complications. Texts and emails should remain brief and unambiguous.
- Emails should not be used as a relationship-building tool but used only to communicate specific information - for example, times dates and location of a tutorial.
- Volunteers 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 tutorials (within the guidelines above) this should take place in the daytime or early evening between 08.00-19.00.
- Volunteers must not text, email or call students late in the evening, as this has the potential to be viewed as inappropriate.
- If volunteers find that their students are communicating at unsociable hours, they should make their UAO aware.

Reporting concerns

- All volunteers at TAP have a duty of care towards their student.
- For any non-emergency queries, please contact your UAO.
- Any safeguarding concerns about a TAP student should be passed on to TAP's 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: stayingsafe@theaccessproject.org.uk
Phone number: 020 4513 5999
NSPCC helpline: 0808 800 5000