Mobile Phones & Acceptable Use of Technology Policy

1. Introduction and aims

Oaks Rise will provide an appropriate electronic device – e.g. a tablet, laptop or desktop – to each learner, based on their learning needs, the project(s) they are working on and preferred device. Oaks Rise will also allow learners to use their mobile phones when at the provision. As such, safeguards must be in place to ensure the safety of our learners when using devices.

This policy outlines the boundaries we have in place to keep our learners safe: safeguarding considerations; acceptable and unacceptable uses of technology and; the safeguarding measures we have in place.

2. Safeguarding Considerations

Many of our learners, especially those who have been out of education for some time, may have spent significant time with their main outlet for socialising being through the internet. We recognise that for many neurodivergent young people the internet can provide a significantly more accessible way of communicating and socialising than face to face interactions. We also appreciate that many of our learners use mobile phones to self-regulate and to manage social anxiety. As such, mobile phones are allowed to be used throughout sessions.

Whilst we want to encourage our learners to use technology in ways that enhances their education and improves their wellbeing, we also need to ensure that they are doing so in a way that keeps them safe.

Some of the safeguarding concerns relating to the use of technology at Oaks Rise include the following which is not exhaustive:
- Learners may engage in or be victims of abuse and exploitation through online messaging apps such as snapchat.
- Learners may access inappropriate content online.
- Learners may take videos or pictures of other learners whilst on site and post these online without consent.

1

- Learners' wellbeing may be affected by overuse of social media, electronic devices, mobile phones, and the internet.

3. Acceptable Use of Technology

We consider the following to be acceptable uses of technology. This list is not exhaustive and if in doubt learners and parents/carers should contact Oaks Rise to check whether an activity is deemed appropriate.

- Researching a project.
- Typing up findings or otherwise presenting information in a document.
- Playing games as a way of self-regulating
- Listening to music (whilst using headphones or checking with other learners that they would like to listen to the music too, and provided the lyrics are appropriate for an educational setting).
- Using educational apps such as Seek, Geocaching, Zuzu, Habitica, News apps, web browsers, Duolingo, Audiobook apps, etc.
- Recording and mixing music (provided the lyrics are appropriate for an educational setting).
- Recording and editing videos (provided the content is appropriate for an educational setting and no one is in the video without their direct consent).
- Creating digital art (provided the content is appropriate for an educational setting).

4. Unacceptable Use of Technology

We consider the following to be unacceptable uses of technology. This list is not exhaustive and if in doubt learners and parents/carers should contact Oaks Rise to check whether an activity is deemed inappropriate.

- Taking videos or pictures of other learners, staff members, or members of the public without their permission.
- Using messaging apps or social media whilst at Oaks Rise.
- Researching inappropriate content.
- Watching YouTube videos or other content that is inappropriate.
- Communicating with anyone external from Oaks Rise, aside from their parents/carers whilst at Oaks Rise.

Unacceptable use of technology will have consequences for learners, as outlined in our Community Guidelines Policy. However, if a learner accidentally accesses inappropriate content or does so unknowingly because they do not understand that it is inappropriate they should let a staff member know as soon as possible. Learners will not face any consequences if they have unknowingly accessed inappropriate content. However they

may be required to engage in a discussion around this with staff members so that we can gauge whether they or other learners have been harmed by what they have interacted with.

5. Safeguarding Measures

Oaks Rise has several overarching safeguarding measures in place which seek to protect learners from on-line harm. These include:

Electronic Filtering System: Learners must use the Oaks Rise network when attending the setting and this has an in-built filtering system designed to block inappropriate content and social media and messaging platforms. Parents/carers are asked to ensure that their child / young person (CYP) does not use the mobile connectivity on their personal devise when attending Oaks Rise and only uses the Oaks Rise network. Oaks Rise will advise learners of this when they start with us and will also regularly remind learners.

Active Monitoring: Oaks Rise understands that no electronic filtering system is fool-proof and that active monitoring by staff of the data and apps that learners are accessing is required to complement the automated filtering system.

Staff training: All staff are required to undertake a certified training course on internet safety, filtering and monitoring as well as PREVENT as part of our new-staff induction process (as well as a comprehensive range of other safeguarding trainings).

Complementary Policies: Our community Guidelines Policy and Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy outline how we will deal with all occurrences of bullying and child-on-child abuse.

PSHE / Wellbeing Curriculum: As part of our PSHE / Wellbeing curriculum we ensure that there is ongoing and open discussion around online safety with learners. The ways in which we utilise technology, what it brings to our lives, and what it detracts, will be embedded within wellbeing and PSHE activities. This includes the dangers surrounding messaging apps, social media and child-on-child abuse and the concept of consent. This will help our learners to develop important independence skills, critical thinking skills, and safety awareness in relation to the internet, online relationship, misinformation, online grooming, exploitation, and radicalisation.

Parental engagement: Parents/carers are asked to ensure that their child / young person (CYP) does not use the mobile connectivity on their personal devise when attending Oaks Rise. We also request that parents / carers have regular conversations with their CYP about the benefits, dangers and safe use of technology.