



Concentric Support Digital Media Policy

Unlike Schools, Children's Services, the Police or Youth Offending Servicers, Youth Work is a consensual service. Young people are under no mandatory obligation to engage with us. We therefore need to not only make it as easy and appealing as possible for them to work with us, but we also need to respect them if they choose not to.

In order to communicate effectively with young people, it is necessary to use the methods of communication with which they are most comfortable, at times and in such places as they are most comfortable.

Over the past decade, Social Media has replaced the conventional idea of Youth Clubs. Instead of gathering in a church hall, young people now gather online and if we, as youth workers, are going to continue to provide support and interventions, then we need to be online too.

At most times, Social Media can be a valuable tool for engaging with young people. But during the pandemic it was often the only means of young people to access help and support. There are also circumstances where young people can actually feel more comfortable with the anonymity of communicating via social media rather than meeting face to face. All this supports a compelling case for professionals to use Social Media as a tool in their work. However we must also recognise that our interventions into young people's lives must be approached in a professional manner at all times.

Concentric Support currently uses Facebook as its preferred Social Media Platform. However it is recognised that trends change, and as more and more young people are moving towards Snapchat and Tiktok, then it may be necessary for us to develop a presence on these platforms in the future.

Core principles of digital youth work with Concentric Support:

1. This policy relates to all digital media, including email, telephone calls, SMS, and social media platforms.
2. Professional and personal Digital Media accounts should always be kept separate. No personal information should ever be shared via a professional account. Any contact received on a personal account should be politely refused and the young person should be directed to the worker's professional account.
3. Contact should only be made with someone with whom you have first met in real life (unless a referral has been received by a third party). Where possible, it is advised to discuss use of social media with a young person in a face to face session, before an initial digital contact is made.
4. Some young people may not feel comfortable engaging with a Youth Worker online, or may consider it to be an intrusion. Where this proves to be the case, their privacy should always be respected and other means of communication should be explored.
5. All Concentric Support online sessions and contacts are subject to the same safeguarding policy as face to face sessions.

6. All online sessions should be recorded in case notes in exactly the same way as any other session.

Out of hours online contacts

Concentric Support does not run a 24 hour support service. However, we recognise that young people tend not to keep regular office hours, and may often be at their most communicative in the evenings or at weekends. Where it is convenient for the worker, it is acceptable to respond to a client at evenings or during weekends as required. Likewise, if it is known that a client is experiencing a particularly difficult time at home, it is acceptable to reach out to them and check that everything is ok outside normal office hours. However if it is not felt convenient or appropriate, then this should be explained to the young person and the contact ended.

There is no obligation or expectation for either client or worker to reply immediately to any digital communication. This is something which should be respected by both parties. In most cases, messages sent or received during the evening or weekend will not be dealt with until the following working day.

All out of hours contacts should be recorded in case notes.

This policy is subject to biannual review as trends and national guidelines change. Further information about online Youth Work can be found in the following online resources.

References:

- [European Guidelines for Digital Youth Work](#)
- [Tips for Online Youth Work \(Youth Scotland\)](#)
- [Youth Work and Social Networking \(National Youth Agency\)](#)
- [Guide to delivering Digital Youth Work \(UK Youth\)](#)
- [Concentric Support Safeguarding Policy Statement](#)

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