

NEWTON ABBOT TOWN COUNCIL



Mobile Phone Policy

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Reviewed	February 2020, February 2022, February 2024
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Reviewed By	Policy & Resources Committee

Mobile Phone Policy

1. Aim

The aim of the Mobile Phone Policy is to promote safe and appropriate practice through establishing clear and robustly acceptable use guidelines. This is achieved through balancing protection against potential misuse with the recognition that mobile phones are effective communication tools - which in turn can contribute to safeguarding practice and protection.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff who have access to personal or work-related mobile phones at ~~Newton's Place~~ during working hours.

3. Policy statement

3.1 It is recognised that it is the enhanced functions of many mobile phones that cause the most concern, and which are most susceptible to misuse. Misuse includes the taking and distribution of indecent images, exploitation and bullying.

3.2 It is also recognised that mobile phones can cause an unnecessary distraction during the working day and can be intrusive when used in the company of others. When mobile phones are misused it can impact on an individual's dignity, privacy and right to confidentiality. This use and misuse includes texting and accessing/using social media.

3.3 It is appreciated that it can be very difficult to detect when such devices are present or being used, particularly in relation to enhanced functions, such as cameras. Use of all mobile phones is therefore limited, regardless of their capabilities. The aim is to avoid distraction and disruption of the working day.

4. Code of conduct

A code of conduct is promoted with the aim of creating a co-operative workforce, where staff work as a team, have high values and respect each other; thus creating a strong morale and sense of commitment leading to increased productivity. It is therefore ensured that all staff:

- understand the need for professional boundaries and clear guidance regarding acceptable use.
- are responsible for self-moderation of their own behaviours.
- have a clear understanding of what constitutes misuse (calls/texts/messaging).
- are vigilant and alert to any potential warning signs.
- know how to minimise risk.

- avoid putting themselves into compromising situations which could be misinterpreted and lead to possible allegations.
- are aware of the importance of reporting concerns.

It is fully recognised that studies consistently indicate that imposing rigid regulations and/or 'bans' on the actions of others can be counterproductive, leading to a culture of suspicion, uncertainty and secrecy. The imposition of rigorous, inflexible rules is therefore avoided, unless the potential risks of not enforcing them far out-weigh the benefits. An agreement of trust is therefore promoted regarding the carrying and use of mobile phones within the setting environment, which is agreed to by all staff.

5. Procedures

5.1 Personal mobiles - Avoid the use of mobile phones causing unnecessary disruptions and distractions within the workplace, and ensure effective safeguarding practice is promoted to protect against potential misuse. In the interests of equality, and to further promote safety. The guidance applies to any individual who has a mobile phone on site, including staff, councillors, volunteers and visitors, as detailed below:

Staff are permitted to have their mobile phones about their person; however, there is a clear expectation that all personal use (calls/texting/messaging) is limited to allocated lunch breaks. Other than in agreed exceptional circumstances, phones must be switched to silent and calls and texts/messaging must not be taken or made during work time, unless a safeguarding concern is suspected. The phone however must be switched on silent and not used during the course of the day, except with express permission. Should phone calls and/or texts/messages need to be taken or made, use is restricted to suitable areas to avoid any unnecessary disturbance or disruption to others. Under no circumstances is any individual permitted to take images or make recordings on a mobile phone without the agreement of those involved.

5.2 Work mobile/ work use mobile - The use of a designated work mobile (or personal mobile) is promoted as an essential part of the emergency toolkit which is taken on off-site trips:

- an effective communication aid, enabling text, email messages and calls to be made and received.
- a back-up facility should problems be experienced with the landline – or where contact needs to be made outside of work hours.

5.3 Driving - If any member of staff is required to drive in a working capacity, and has responsibility for the work mobile, the phone must not be used whilst driving. It is strongly recommended that staff follow the same procedures regarding their own personal mobile phones. Under no circumstances should staff drive whilst taking a phone call or texting. This also applies to hands-free and wireless connections, which are considered a distraction rather than a safer alternative.



5.4 Emergency contact - It is recognised that mobile phones provide direct contact to others, and at times provide a necessary reassurance due to their ease of access, particularly at stressful times. Staff, therefore, in agreed exceptional circumstances are permitted to keep the volume of their phone switched on. This is to enhance their own wellbeing and peace of mind, to reduce stress and worry and to enable them to concentrate more effectively on their work. Such use will be for an agreed limited period only, until any concerns or issues leading to the exceptional circumstance request have been resolved. It is ensured at all times that the landline telephone remains connected and operational, except in circumstances beyond control. This means that it is available for emergency/urgent contact at all times. The reliance on an answer phone is avoided except for times outside of the setting operating hours. The answer phone is always checked promptly on opening or return.

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