

Mentoring held as distance learning sessions online:

Safeguarding guidelines

Policy date: April 2023

Policy reviewed date: April 2024/June 2024

Every online mentoring session arranged needs to be sent an invite through email as an electronic paper reference.

For learner under 18 years of age, liaise directly with the parent/carer, not the student, to set up the mentoring session. A learner's email address can be used but any correspondence sent must include the parents address as well.

Ensure that a precise time for the session is arranged in advance and agree on the digital platform you will be using – this will usually be Google Meet.

Maintain your normal standards of professionalism, even if mentoring from your own home (adhere to your normal dress code, for instance, and consider the environment that will be on show to your learner).

Preparing your space

- Use a plain background in the digital environment or a blurred background. No personal items should be on display and no features in the background that might enable your home or address to be identifiable (including turning off your location ID)
- Deliver the session from a quiet space to avoid distractions and interruptions.
- Alert any members of your household that your meeting is taking place and is confidential. Ensure that you have appropriate agreements in place with people within your household that they are not to interrupt the session. In cases of emergencies though have an agreed way in which they can alert you, e.g. knock on the door 3 times. Ensure they use appropriate language and behaviour if nearby.
- If other people are within your household use earphones so that confidentiality is upheld for the learner.

Your chosen platform

- Familiarise your platform you are using e.g. Zoom, Google Meets, Microsoft teams. Each platform has different functions and settings.
- Make sure the platform that you are using is suitable for the age group. Check on the age restrictions of the platform you are operating on. Gain consent from the parent/carer to use the required platform. This can in the form of an email or a completed form.
- Ensure the platform software you are using is up to date as hackers can exploit these flaws to access personal information.

- Ensure that you have up to date anti-virus software installed and run regular scans of devices being used.

Settings

- Use a professional business account to conduct meetings and send invites from.
- Ensure only people with the link to the meeting access the meeting and are able to join. You may consider using a password.
- Customise the title of the meeting so the participant knows they have joined the right virtual meeting e.g. create a meeting topic title (e.g. mentoring with ...) and your company logo (if possible).
- Most platforms also allow a waiting room function so you can control who can enter the meeting and allows you to let them join when you're ready. You can also disable the join before host function so participants cannot join the virtual meeting before you have started it.
- Make sure that only you as the host can share your screen, to prevent unwanted attendees from interrupting the meeting with intrusive sharing.
- Disable private conversations happening in your virtual meetings. Make sure that participants can contact the host and everyone in the group, but not individually to other participants on the call.
- Some platforms automatically record virtual meetings, so think about if this is right for your meeting, where you will store the files and for how long in compliance with data protection regulations. Make sure you have checked the settings, so you don't unknowingly share data to the cloud.

Preparing young people for the virtual meeting

Check list:

- Ensure all parents/carers and young people participating in the virtual meeting have completed a consent form, agreeing to the code of conduct outlined by your organisation and consenting to participating in the virtual meeting. Make sure parents/carers and young people all understand the benefits and risks of virtual meetings.
- Considering (if applicable) sending an agenda ahead of the virtual meeting so participants have an idea of what to expect and how long the meeting will last. Do they need to prepare anything? Will the virtual meeting be interactive?
- Communicate with participants the purpose of the meeting, as this will guide people in ensuring impactful engagements.
- Make sure you share the URL for the virtual meeting privately with participants and that it is not shared on social media.
- Encourage young people to keep their camera lens physically covered when not in use either with the lens cover for webcams or taping something over the lens for mobile/laptop. Some apps may be susceptible to hacking.
- Check with the parent/carer that access to online mentoring is suitable and using a Wi-Fi connection, as mobile data is more costly.

Code of conduct:

- Access to the platform being made through parent/ carers account if under the age of 18.
- An appropriate adult remaining in the room during the virtual meeting to support anyone under the age of 18.
- Young people under the age of 18 to be 'dropped off' at the session by their parent/guardian so staff know there is an appropriate adult nearby if required.
- Young people participating must be appropriately dressed and in a suitable, communal environment (not their bedroom).
- All members of the young person's household must be aware that the virtual meeting is taking place and ensure they use appropriate language and behaviour if nearby.
- Asking if the young person needs any additional support to enable them to feel safe and included in the virtual meeting.

Advice that will be provided to parents/carers:

- Help young people set up a quiet space, free of background distractions for the duration of the online session (ideally not a bedroom).
- Where possible, arrange for the lesson to be delivered via the parent's login/device rather than from a learner's phone or device. If this is not possible it is to be recorded for each session which login was used.
- Ensure that the young person is prepared for the mentor session in the same way they would prepare for a session in person (i.e. gather a pen, notebook and copy of the previous mentor session report for reference).
- Ensure that young person maintains their usual standards of dress code and behaviour, as if they were having a session in person.
- Ensure a parent/carer is available at the start of a session, as appropriate, to assist the young person to log in.
- The parent is to join the learner at the start of every session to acknowledge they are present. If not parent is able to be present for the session parents/carers and learners must be aware that sessions will be recorded. Recordings will be stored in guidance with the Data Protection Act 2018 for a minimum of 6 years.
- Where possible, parents should remain in earshot for the duration of the session.

After the virtual meeting:

- Ensure there are minutes from the meeting or a log of the call.
- Debrief with your cohost(s) (if applicable).
- Follow up with the actions from your virtual meeting (if any) to make it clear what the next steps are. This could include the date and time of your next virtual meeting, or useful links/resources spoken about.
- Continue to contact all young people using normal procedures e.g. emailing, making it clear that practitioners and young people should not try to contact one another using virtual calls outside of these prearranged meetings.