

Use of Mobile Phones and Cameras in the Playroom

Most people have and use mobile phones. They are convenient and enable people to contact each other, particularly in an emergency. Playgroup has a mobile phone solely for the use of the service, to ensure effective communication between the service and service users during its day to day operations.

However, in Playgroup we know it is good practice to restrict the use of personal mobile phones, by staff, parents, carers and others in the playroom during the session, as they have the potential to

- distract children from their learning
- inhibit an adult's capacity to readily and effectively interact and engage with the children
- distract from the care of children and increase the potential risk of harm
- present risk to children's health
- create tensions between and amongst staff and service users
- disrupt the smooth running of the session.

Mobile Phone Use in Playgroup

Playgroup will ensure that all staff, including rota parents and all others in the playroom:

- switch off mobile phones or switch them to silent mode while working with the children.
- understand that making or taking personal calls while they are working is not acceptable, unless it is done within an official break and is away from the areas the children are using. If someone has a genuine reason for using their phone while at work, permission should be sought from the Playleader in charge and suitable arrangements put in place to cover the person whilst they make/respond to a call.
- know and understand that Playgroup's contact number should be used to receive or send messages in an emergency.
- consider how their use of mobile phones influences how children might learn to use them.
- know and understand that camera and video phones should never be used to take photographs or videos of children while they are in Playgroup, unless the following requirements are fully met:
 - it has been authorised by the Playleader in charge
 - express written permission has been granted by the children's parent/ guardians and by any adults who are being photographed or parent/guardians are informed that photographs/videos are being taken and are made aware of the context in which photographs/videos will be used

- there is compliance with Data Protection and with Playgroup's policy on storage and retention of images.

Understand the consequences of using a mobile while working with the children, for example:

- there may be raised concerns amongst service users about the care and safety of children whilst they are attending Playgroup
- a breach of Playgroup's rules could lead to disciplinary action for employees and could affect registration as a social service worker
- a breach of rules could lead to claims of negligence if someone is hurt as a consequence of this
- insurance premiums could rise
- a breach of the guidelines could be subject to an investigation and could also lead to criminal prosecution under various laws.

Ensure information about the use of mobiles in Playgroup is accessible to staff, parents, carers, volunteers and others who use the service:

- provide information to staff and regular volunteers during induction about the policy on the use of mobile phones while at work
- use Playgroup's policies to inform parents and carers
- consider posting information on the notice-board.

Camera and Video Phones

Camera and video phones, if used to photograph children, are subject to the same restrictions as the use of cameras.

Usage and storage of photographs

If photographs are taken with camera and video mobile phones, specific permissions will be sought for this from the persons and, where applicable, their parents/guardians.

Playgroup will follow good practice to ensure that:

- written permission for usage will always specify what the photographs may be used for written permission and usage of the photographs will be deemed as being valid for a specified period, for example, three years, after which time permission will be re-sought
- images which are not covered by renewed consent will not be used again and will be safely destroyed
- photographs are only stored on Playgroup's computers and/or are held as paper copies, on negatives or on CD.
- all paper copies, negatives, computer disks and photograph permission forms are stored in a secure place.