

THE HAVEN

Operated by the Autistic Girls Network charity — 1196655 (England and Wales), SC054837 (Scotland)

Mobile Phone Policy — Learners

Use of mobile phones and personal devices by learners at The Haven

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Owner	Designated Safeguarding Lead
Approved by	Proprietor + Governing Body

1. Purpose

This policy sets out The Haven's expectations on the use of mobile phones and personal devices by learners during their time with us. It supports safeguarding, online safety, the quality of learning, and the wellbeing of every young person in our community.

The Haven is a specialist online education provision. Learners participate from their own homes, and many use multiple devices in the course of a day. This policy is written for that reality. It is not a copy of a building-based school's phone policy.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all learners at The Haven during:

- Live online sessions and pre-recorded learning.
- Use of The Haven's learning platforms, including chat and shared digital spaces.
- Communication with educators, mentors and other Haven staff.
- In-person meet-ups, days out, and any other Haven activity. It applies regardless of whether the device is owned by the learner, their family, or provided by their Local Authority. It is read alongside the BYOD Policy, Online Safety Policy and Family Attendance Agreement.

3. Principles

- Phones are not, in themselves, a problem. They are tools, sources of regulation, and lifelines.
- Many of our learners use their phones to support sensory and emotional regulation. We respect this.

- We expect phones to be used in ways that protect the learner's own learning, the learning of others, and the safety of the community.
- Expectations are taught and modelled, not imposed.
- Where a young person's phone use is causing them or others harm, we respond with curiosity and support before consequence.

4. During live online sessions

4.1 If the phone is the learning device

Some learners attend sessions using a mobile phone as their primary device because of household circumstances, sensory preference, or accessibility need. This is welcomed. Where the phone is the learning device, the expectations are the same as for any other device: engagement is what works for the learner, with cameras and microphones optional.

4.2 If the phone is a secondary device

Where the learner is attending on a laptop, tablet or other device and has a phone alongside, we ask that:

- Notifications are silenced or set to do not disturb during sessions.
- The phone is not used to take calls or send messages mid-session except in genuine need.
- The phone is not used to photograph, record, screenshot or otherwise capture sessions, other learners, educators, or shared materials. These expectations apply equally to other personal devices alongside the learning device.

4.3 Sensory and regulation use

Use of a phone for music, fidget or regulation apps, timers, or calming visual content during a session is welcomed. The learner does not need to ask permission. If a learner needs to step away to use their phone to regulate, this is fine; rejoining is welcomed without comment.

4.4 The statutory phone-free expectation, and how it applies here

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 states that schools should be mobile phone-free environments by default, with anything other than that by exception only. That expectation is written for settings with premises, where a phone can be handed in at the start of the day and given back at the end.

The Haven has no premises, no managed network and does not issue or manage devices: learners take part from devices they or their families own, on home internet connections The Haven does not administer. Learners are at home, frequently on the same device that is also their phone. The Haven cannot make a learner's home phone-free, does not ask families to attempt it, and will not write a rule it has no way of standing behind. Claiming a phone-free environment would be inaccurate, and inaccuracy in a safeguarding policy is a worse outcome than an honest limitation.

What The Haven asks instead is set out in 4.1 to 4.3: during a live session the phone is either the learning device, or is set aside as far as the learner is able. Where phone use is getting in the way of a learner's learning or wellbeing, the response is the supportive one in section 11, not a sanction.

This adaptation is deliberate. It is recorded here so that it reads as a considered position rather than an omission, and it is revisited whenever the statutory guidance changes or The Haven's device provision changes.

5. Recording, photographing and screenshotting

Recording, photographing or screenshotting any part of a live session, any other learner, or any educator, is not permitted. This is a safeguarding requirement. Learners are reminded of this at induction and at the start of each term.

Where a learner has captured content that they should not have, the response is supportive: the educator records the concern, the DSL is informed where appropriate, and a conversation is held with the learner and family. The Behaviour Incident Reporting Procedure applies. The Haven's expectation is that the content is deleted and not shared. Repeated or harmful incidents are escalated under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the Child-on-Child Abuse Policy.

6. Communication with staff

Learners contact The Haven's educators and staff only through The Haven's approved channels — the learning platforms and the email or messaging accounts provided. Learners should not use staff personal mobile numbers, personal messaging apps, or personal social media accounts to contact staff. Equally, staff are not permitted to use these channels to contact learners (see Mobile Phone Policy — Staff).

If a learner believes a member of staff has tried to contact them outside the approved channels, the learner — or their family — should report this to the Head or the DSL. This is a safeguarding matter.

7. Communication with peers

Where learners exchange contact details with peers they meet through The Haven, this happens privately between families and is not facilitated, monitored or moderated by The Haven. We encourage families to talk with their young person about online communication and to read our Digital Age of Consent guide. Where peer-to-peer communication causes harm, the Anti-Bullying Policy and Child-on-Child Abuse Policy apply, regardless of where the communication took place.

8. In-person meet-ups and days out

At in-person Haven activities, learners may keep and use their phones as they wish, subject to the following:

- Phones are not used to photograph or record other learners, families, staff, members of the public, or venue features, without explicit consent. The Declaration: Photos, Videos and Lesson Recordings policy applies.
- Where a learner needs to use their phone for music, regulation or contact with family, this is welcomed.
- Where a phone is used in a way that disrupts the activity, an educator will speak with the learner.

9. Loss, damage and theft

The Haven cannot be responsible for the loss, damage or theft of learners' personal devices. At in-person events, learners are encouraged to keep their phones with them. Loss or theft at an in-person event is reported promptly so we can support the learner and their family in next steps.

10. Phones as a safeguarding concern

In a small number of cases, a learner's phone use may itself be a safeguarding concern — for example, exposure to harmful content, contact with someone unsafe, online exploitation, or self-harm. In these cases,

The Haven follows the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Online Safety Policy. The response is led by the DSL in partnership with the family and, where indicated, statutory services.

11. Where phone use causes harm to the learner

Where we have concerns that a learner's phone use is causing harm to their wellbeing — excessive use displacing sleep, learning or relationships; compulsive use; distress associated with content — we raise the concern with the family in the spirit of partnership. We do not direct the family on how to manage device use at home, but we offer signposting to specialist resources and adjust our own offer where helpful.

12. Roles and responsibilities

- The learner: Uses their phone in ways consistent with these expectations; raises concerns where they have them.
- The family: Partners with The Haven in supporting healthy device use; signs the Family Attendance Agreement which references these expectations.
- Educators: Model expected use of devices; notice and respond proportionately; record concerns.
- The DSL: Leads safeguarding responses where phone use crosses into a safeguarding concern.
- The Head: Owns this policy and oversees its application.

13. Related documents

- BYOD Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Family Attendance Agreement
- Mobile Phone Policy — Staff
- Declaration: Photos, Videos and Lesson Recordings
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Child-on-Child Abuse Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour Incident Reporting Procedure
- Relational Behaviour and Regulation Policy
- Digital Age of Consent guide for parents

14. Review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Head and approved by the Board of Governors. It will be reviewed sooner where statutory or regulatory guidance changes.

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