**Purpose**

This policy aims to establish guidelines for the safe and effective use of ‘Group Messaging Platforms’ for communication within **[organisation name],** particularly focusing on interactions involving young people aged 13+. It ensures compliance with safeguarding procedures and promotes a positive, secure environment for employees and members.

**Scope**

This policy applies to all **[organisation name]** staff, volunteers, young people aged 13+, parents, and carers involved in using Group Messaging Platforms for organisation-related communication.

**Group Setup**

1. **Permissions and Consent**
	* Obtain written consent from parents or carers before adding young people aged 13+ to a messaging platform group.
	* Seek the agreement of young people aged 13+ to join the group.
	* Under no circumstances whatsoever should any young person under the age of 13 be communicated with via a group messaging platform or added to a messaging group.
2. **Group Administration**
	* A minimum of two adults who are DBS checked and have completed safeguarding training, must be designated as group administrators.
	* Group administrators must be familiar with the platform’s functionalities, including deleting messages and blocking users if necessary.
	* Groups should be closed should there no longer be a need for them e.g. following an event or whereby communication between parties is no longer required.
3. **Naming the Group**
	* Choose a clear and specific name for the group to avoid confusion and ensure easy identification, e.g., "Club Logistics 2025".
4. **Codes of Conduct and Policies**
	* All group members, including young people, parents, and carers, must sign a code of conduct and a safer use policy before being added to the group.
	* Group administrators should post the group rules and acceptable behaviours as the first message in the chat. This should remain pinned throughout the duration of the chat.

**Communication Guidelines**

**Message Content**

* Ensure all messages are respectful, relevant, and appropriate.
* Avoid sharing personal information that is not necessary for group activities.
* Use group messaging for general information only and avoid one-on-one messaging with young people.
1. **Monitoring and Moderation**
	* Group administrators must actively monitor the group chat to ensure compliance with the code of conduct.
	* Inappropriate messages, images, or videos must be deleted immediately, and the sender should be addressed according to the BowlsWales Safeguarding Policy.
2. **Privacy and Safety**
	* Use the group chat function to communicate rather than individual messaging to prevent potential misuse.
	* Refrain from using features such as ‘read once’ and ‘disappearing messages’ for sharing critical information.
3. **Live Location Sharing**
	* Only share live locations when necessary for safety purposes, such as during group outings or events.

**Safeguarding Measures**

1. **Reporting Concerns**
	* Inform all group members how to report any concerns or inappropriate behaviour within the group.
	* Ensure that all members know how to remove themselves from the group if they feel uncomfortable.
2. **Parental Involvement**
	* Regularly update parents and carers about the group activities and any changes in the group’s operation.
3. **Training and Resources**
	* Signpost young people to online safety resources, such as Childline, UK Safer Internet Centre, CEOP, and Childnet.

**Compliance and Review**

1. **Policy Adherence**
	* Ensure all **[organisation name]** staff and volunteers are aware of and adhere to this Group Messaging Platform usage policy.
	* Regularly review the group’s activity to ensure compliance with the policy.
2. **Annual Review**
	* This policy should be reviewed annually and updated as necessary to reflect changes in technology or legislation, safeguarding guidelines and best practice, or **[organisation name]** operational requirements.

By following these guidelines, **[organisation name]** aims to provide a safe and effective communication platform for all members, fostering a positive environment and ensuring the well-being of young people involved in our activities.