Mobile phone policy

How [Home name] supports children to use mobile phones safely, keep in touch with the people who matter to them, and stay safe online.

Home name	Registered manager	Date approved	Next review

> This template follows the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the government's guide to them, as they stood on 11 November 2026. It isn't legal advice. Replace everything in [square brackets], delete anything that doesn't apply, and check it with your own adviser.

1 About this policy

This policy explains how [Home name] supports children to use mobile phones safely, keep in touch with the people who matter to them, and stay safe online. It applies to every child living at the home and everyone who works here.

It should be read with our statement of purpose, child protection policy (including e-safety), behaviour management policy, anti-bullying policy and missing child policy.

2 Our approach

- A phone is a normal part of growing up, and for many children the main way they keep in touch with family and friends.
- We make decisions for each child, based on their needs, their care plan and their risk assessment, not blanket rules for the whole home.
- We restrict as little as we can, for as short a time as we can, and we explain our reasons to the child.
- We help each child understand how their privacy will be respected, and when it may have to be limited.
- We help children learn to keep themselves safe online, so they're ready for more independence as they grow up.

3 Phones at [Home name]

- [Say who provides children's phones: the home, the placing authority or the child's family, and who pays for calls and data.]
- Children may keep a phone they already have, unless their care plan says otherwise.
- Every child can make and receive calls in private at all reasonable times. If a child's own phone is lost, broken or out of credit, they can use [the home's phone, in a private room].
- A child's phone number and their contact arrangements are recorded in their placement plan.
- If a phone is lost or damaged, we may ask the child to pay back only a reasonable sum, in instalments if needed.

4 Agreeing the rules with each child

- When a child moves in, we agree their phone rules with them, and with their social worker, using [a phone agreement].
- The agreement covers where the phone charges at night, school, meals and homework, who they share their number with, posting photos, and what happens if the agreement isn't kept.
- We record the agreement in the child's placement plan, and review it at each care plan review, giving more freedom as the child shows they can manage it.

5 Contact with family and friends

- We support children to keep in touch by calls, texts, social media and video calls, in line with their placement plan and any court orders.
- We only restrict a child's contact, or their access to a phone, if it's necessary to safeguard them or promote their welfare, and only with their placing authority's agreement. In an emergency, we give the placing authority full details within 24 hours.
- We never restrict a child's contact with family or friends as a punishment.
- Children can always contact a helpline such as Childline, and their social worker, advocate or independent visitor, in private.
- Any restriction is explained to the child, recorded in their records, and reviewed.

6 Monitoring

- We only monitor a child's phone if it's for their safeguarding or welfare, or other children's; their placing authority agrees in writing, at placement where possible; the child is told in advance; and it's no more intrusive than necessary.
- We describe our approach to monitoring in our statement of purpose.
- We don't read children's messages or listen to their calls as a matter of routine.
- [List the phone service, apps and settings the home uses, and which of them need the placing authority's agreement.]

7 Staying safe online

- Staff talk with children regularly about staying safe online, including bullying, grooming, sexual and criminal exploitation, radicalisation, nudes and scams.
- Children know they won't be in trouble for telling a member of staff that something has gone wrong online.
- Any concern about grooming or exploitation is reported to [the designated safeguarding lead] straight away and handled under our child protection policy, including notifying Ofsted where required.
- Bullying online is handled under our anti-bullying policy.

8 Night-time

- Where each child's phone charges at night is agreed in their phone agreement, to help them sleep.
- Night-time arrangements are never used as a punishment.

9 Taking a phone away

- Taking a phone away is a last resort. We start with a conversation and a change of settings.
- We never take a phone to cut a child off from family or friends as a punishment.
- If a phone has to be taken for a child's safety, the decision is made by [the registered manager or the senior member of staff on shift], is necessary and proportionate, and lasts as short a time as possible.
- If it restricts the child's contact, we agree it with the placing authority or, in an emergency, tell them within 24 hours.
- We never use physical force to take a phone from a child.
- We tell the child why, record it within 24 hours in line with our behaviour management policy, review it within [24 hours], and give the phone back as soon as it's safe.
- The child is told how to complain or get an advocate.

10 Looking through a child's phone

- We don't look through children's phones as a matter of routine.
- If there's a safeguarding concern, we ask the child first and explain why. A manager agrees any decision to look without the child's agreement, and we talk to the child's social worker.
- We record the reason, how we sought the child's agreement, and what we found.
- If we think a phone holds a nude image of a child, we don't copy, forward or save it, and we follow the UKCIS guidance on sharing nudes and semi-nudes.

11 Photos and social media

- Children don't post photos that show the home, its address or other children who live here.
- Staff only take photos of children on the home's devices, with the child's agreement, and never on personal phones.

12 Staff phones

- Staff don't give children their personal phone numbers or connect with them on social media.
- Staff contact children, and children's families, using [the home's phone].
- [Add your rules on staff using personal phones while on shift.]

13 When a child goes missing

- We follow our missing child policy.
- We keep trying to reach the child by phone and text.
- Any location sharing in an emergency follows what's agreed in the child's plan.

14 Records and review

- We record any restriction on contact, and any measure of control or discipline, in the child's records.
- Each child's phone arrangements are reviewed at their care plan reviews.
- This policy is reviewed at least once a year by [the registered manager], and whenever the law or guidance changes.

15 Related documents

- Statement of purpose
- Child protection policy, including e-safety
- Behaviour management policy
- Anti-bullying policy
- Missing child policy
- Phone agreement for each child
- Placing authority consent form for monitoring and contact restrictions

Approved by (registered manager)	Date