



## WhatsApp with Children and Young People



### What this policy is about

We recognise that messaging platforms such as WhatsApp can be a useful tool for sharing information and supporting engagement with young people and their families. However, the use of WhatsApp also presents safeguarding, privacy and boundary risks.

We are committed to ensuring that all digital communication involving children and young people is conducted safely, transparently and in line with safeguarding best practice.

This guidance applies to all staff, volunteers and anyone communicating on behalf of Tin Shed Theatre CIC.

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### WhatsApp Group Code of Conduct (Young People)

To keep everyone safe, respectful and supported, the following rules apply:

- This group is for official TIN SHED THEATRE CIC communication only.
- All members must communicate respectfully and appropriately at all times.
- No private 1:1 messaging is allowed between young people and staff/volunteers.
- All communication must stay within the group chat.
- There will always be at least two adult admins in this group.
- Do not share personal information (phone numbers, addresses, private details).
- Do not post or upload photos/videos without parent or carer permission.
- If you feel uncomfortable or see something worrying, speak to a trusted adult or contact the safeguarding lead.

This group is monitored to help keep everyone safe. Misuse may result in removal from the group.

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### Minimum Age Requirements

As of 11 April 2024, the minimum age to use WhatsApp in the UK is 13 years old.

- Children under the age of 13 must not be added to WhatsApp groups.
  - Where communication is needed for under 13s, parent/carer-only groups must be used instead.
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## Staff and Volunteer Presence in Groups

To ensure accountability and reduce safeguarding risks:

- All WhatsApp groups involving young people must include at least two adult staff members or volunteers.
  - These adults must be assigned as group administrators.
  - No group should be managed or monitored by a single adult.
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## Privacy and Group Settings

To protect young people's personal information:

- All WhatsApp groups must be set to private, so only invited members (and/or their parents/carers) can join.
- Young people must have parent or carer permission before uploading or sharing any content.

Before adding any individual to a WhatsApp group:

- Permission must be gained, as all members' phone numbers will be visible to others in the group.

Where privacy is a concern, staff may instead use a broadcast list, which allows updates to be sent without sharing phone numbers. Broadcast lists are suitable for one-way communication but are not appropriate where group discussion is required.

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## One-to-One Messaging and Boundaries

TIN SHED THEATRE CIC does not permit private 1:1 messaging between staff/volunteers and young people.

- All communication must take place within approved group chats only.
- If a young person messages a leader privately, the conversation must be moved back into the group or redirected to official organisational channels.

If a child or young person makes direct 1:1 contact:

- The adult volunteer must not respond.
- They must immediately inform their line manager.
- A discussion should take place with the young person's parents/carers to explain why private messaging is not appropriate.

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## **Policies, Agreements and Safeguarding Expectations**

TIN SHED THEATRE CIC is committed to maintaining robust online safety procedures, including:

- Appointing an Online Safety Coordinator (this may also be the nominated safeguarding lead).
- Providing clear expectations for staff and volunteers through a behaviour code for adults.
- Developing an Online Safety Agreement for young people and their parents/carers.
- Having clear reporting and response procedures for any inappropriate online behaviour.

A short version of the expected code of conduct should be:

- pinned within the chat, and/or
- included in the group description.

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## **Parental Awareness and Consent (Under 18s)**

For any WhatsApp group involving young people under 18:

- Parents/carers must be informed that the group exists.
- Written consent should be obtained wherever possible.

Parents/carers should understand:

- what the group is for,

- who the  
and
- how safeguarding concerns will be handled.

administrators are,

Some additional good practice options include:

- copying parents into announcement-only groups, or
- providing regular summaries through email or other official channels.

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## Commitment to Safe Digital Communication

TIN SHED THEATRE CIC will always prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in both in-person and online environments. WhatsApp and other messaging platforms must only be used where they support safe communication and where safeguarding standards are fully upheld.

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**DATE:** 07/01/2026

**DIGITAL SIGNATURE:**



**Signed on behalf of the board of directors by Naomi Cummings**

**NAME:** Naomi Cummings (Board Member for Tin Shed Theatre CIC)

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**DATE:** 07/01/2026

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