



Communication guidelines for volunteers

Last reviewed: October 2022

Date of next review: October 2023

The Access Project is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

These guidelines relate to electronic communication between volunteer tutors and students on The Access Project and explain how to keep the same boundaries and follow the same safeguarding practice as in the physical, offline world.

Acceptable forms of communication

Tutors and students can communicate with each other through The Access Project's designated online tutorial platform (preferred method of communication) or, if the student is in Key Stage 5, via email, text or phone call to arrange tutoring sessions.

For tutors of students in Key Stage 4, communication should only take place through the online platform. If tutors have any difficulties with this communication, they should speak to their University Access Officer (UAO) for advice.

Under no circumstances should contact details be exchanged between students and tutors directly without direction from The Access Project staff. Furthermore, students and tutors should not arrange to meet face to face without prior agreement from The Access Project.

Conducting tutorials online

- At present, tutorials should be held online unless otherwise agreed.
- Tutorials should only be conducted via the online platform as directed by The Access Project, as all tutorials conducted on this platform are recorded and monitored internally
- Under no circumstances should tutorials be conducted through another platform without direction from The Access Project staff, including, but not limited to, Zoom or Microsoft Teams
- If tutors are having any difficulties with using the online platform, they should refer to the platform's troubleshooting guidance or contact their UAO.



Social media

- For the purpose of this policy, social media is defined as websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. This includes, but is not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Facetime, Instagram, Whatsapp, iMessage and Skype
- Volunteers must not use their personal social networking or instant messaging accounts for contact with young people involved with The Access Project
- As an individual in a position of trust, you should not have any students from The Access Project as “friends” on social networking sites. Instead, encourage them to “follow”/“like” The Access Project’s official [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), or [Instagram](#) pages
- If a student adds you on any social media sites, please decline this invite and inform your UAO at the earliest opportunity.

Language and content of electronic messages

- It is not appropriate to have private contact with the young people we work with that is not related to The Access Project - this includes electronic communication
- When communicating with young people, it is important to take great care over the language used. Over-familiarity or language that could be misinterpreted or misconstrued should be avoided at all times
- When sending online messages or emails, both parties should not use informal language as this can be misunderstood and lead to further complications. Texts and emails should remain brief and unambiguous
- Messages should not be used as a relationship-building tool but used only to communicate specific information - for example, times, dates and location of a tutorial
- Volunteers must not use language that is directly (or could be misinterpreted as being) racist, sexist, derogatory, threatening, abusive or sexualised in tone in any communication with a student.

Hours of communication

- When communicating with students outside of tutorials (within the guidelines above) this should take place in the daytime or early evening between 08.00 and 19.00
- Volunteers must not message or call students late in the evening, as this has the potential to be viewed as inappropriate
- If volunteers find that their students are communicating at unsociable hours, they should make their UAO aware.



Reporting concerns

- All volunteers at The Access Project have a duty of care towards their students
- For any non-emergency queries, please contact your UAO
- Any safeguarding concerns about a student on The Access Project should be passed on to our Designated Child Protection Officer following our safeguarding procedures. Please refer to the Safeguarding Children Policy relating to this.

Safeguarding contacts

Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO)

Name: Jennifer Guerin

Email: stayingsafe@theaccessproject.org.uk

Phone number: 020 4513 5999 (option one for safeguarding)

NSPCC helpline: 0808 800 5000