Telephone Policy
Mobile and Landline Phones

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to provide guidance to staff on the use and maintenance of mobile and landline telephone communications systems.

1. Introduction

The telephone is an important communication tool in all homes. It offers easy access for people to communicate with others outside. However, it should be remembered by staff that the use of the home telephone should be for business (service user related) and emergency purposes only.

As a general rule, personal incoming or outgoing calls for staff must not be received whilst on duty (see Section 4).

2. Telephones Within Service Users’ Homes

Future Directions CIC has a responsibility to monitor and protect service users from financial abuse. British Telecom (BT) provides a number of services, which help with this process. With this in mind, it has been agreed that at present British Telecom is the preferred provider of telephone systems within homes where service-users lack capacity. However, if another provider is used, then they must be able to provide the same range of services available from British Telecom at a cost-effective price.

On occasion, telecommunication packages are offered to customers. Any changes to packages or acceptance of additional offers through British Telecom must be discussed, where possible, with the service users concerned and approved by a Manager.

Service users should be encouraged to answer the telephone whenever possible, however, where staff answer they should do so in a polite manner and introduce themselves by name. Staff should not disclose the property address/name.

Where possible, staff should ask service users’ permission to use the telephone when necessary as a matter of courtesy.

All homes will have a local telephone directory and a list of regularly used telephone numbers including approved mobile numbers which will be kept in the communication file.
Staff must not use Operator and Directory Enquiry Services unless absolutely necessary as this is an expensive service.

Staff must be advised to try landline numbers in the first instance and be reminded of the cost of ringing mobile phones. The Managers mobile number should be included in friends and family numbers.

Landline phones must not be used for Company business where a VOIP phone is available. Landline phones must only be used for service user related business such as making medical appointments, contacting relatives, organising activities etc.

Examples of Company business may include:-

- Contacting Managers
- Ringing Marle House
- Ringing Departments regarding staff issues, i.e. PDC, HR, Occupational Health etc.

When considering buying new telephone equipment, i.e. handsets (including faxes, scanners etc.) Managers must first consult with the IT Department and get agreement that the equipment will not interfere with existing IT equipment in the home. Should it become necessary to change the name on the telephone bill for any reason the Manager should first consult with the IT Department as it may result in the telephone and computer being off line for a period of time.

2.1. Faults and Repairs

1. Should there be any fault on the telephone line a member of staff will contact the Telephone Company or IT Department at Calderstones if the fault is on the VOIP phone. A record of this report will be made in the house 24 Hour Report Book.

2. If the telephone is expected to be out of order for any length of time the Manager should be informed and will in turn, notify the On Call Manager. During the time the telephone remains out of order staff should use whichever telephone remains in working order. Should both telephones be out of order arrangements should be made to have use of a mobile telephone until the repairs are completed (see 5.1).

NB: The Manager will ensure that the house telephone is registered with the “Home Care Package”. This is a free service which ensures that the property is identified as a vulnerable group and repairs are dealt with as emergency priority.

2.2. Internet Access

Access to the Internet is provided by the use of hardware and software provided by Future Directions CIC and through a dedicated line. The use of
this equipment is strictly governed by the IM&T Systems Users Code of Conduct.

Under no circumstances must staff using their own equipment access the Internet through the dedicated or home phone line. Where this is evident disciplinary action will be taken against offending staff.

Voice Over Internet Phones (VOIP) are provided in some homes. These phones rely on an Internet connection via Future Directions CIC PC to work.

**Under no circumstances** unless advised by the IT Department must you unplug IT equipment or plug in any new equipment.

Privately bought phones will be recorded in accordance with Private and Joint Purchases.

3. **Monitoring Of Telephone Bills**

   **Monthly** fully itemised telephone bills will be requested from the telephone company by the Manager.

   On receipt telephone bills will be checked, including length of calls made, numbers used, time of day etc. by the Manager using previous bills as an expenditure guide. The bill will be dated and signed to acknowledge that checks have taken place. Any issues arising from the checks should be raised with Operational Network Managers.

   Telephone bills must be filed in date order in the home for a period of twelve months, after which time they will be filed and stored at a centrally designated storage area in accordance with Company guidance.

   Where a bill is for example:-

   - Excessive compared with previous bills and/or;
   - There are unusual or 09 numbers.
   - Calls are excessively long.
   - Mobile phone numbers appear.

   *(This is not an exhaustive list)*

   The Team Manager will alert the Operational Network Manager and undertake a preliminary fact finding investigation and report their initial findings to the Operational Network Managers.

   On completion of the initial fact finding investigation the Team Manager will discuss it with an Operational Network Manager who will determine if a more detailed investigation is required.

   The Director of Operations will be advised and kept up to date by the Operations Manager.
The Director of Operations will determine if the matter should be referred to the Director of Finance.

3.1. **Agency Staff**

This procedure will be brought to the attention of Agency Workers by the Manager or the Person in Charge *(key holder)*. A record to this effect will be made on the Future Directions Induction Checklist.

Where it is evident that an Agency Worker has misused a phone the matter will be referred in writing to the Employing Agency by the Manager. Following their investigation recompense for calls will be requested of the employing Agency.

**British Telecom** offers a service where suspected excessive phone use can be checked at any time. British Telecom can issue each household with an individual Pin Number to access this service.

### 4. Emergency Contact – Land Line Phones

#### 4.1. Emergency Incoming Calls

Future Directions CIC recognises that staff may need to be contacted by family members in an **emergency** whilst at work. It is, therefore, considered appropriate that **close** family members, i.e. partners, parents, siblings may be given the home phone number for emergency use only.

Alternatively family or friends can contact Marle House who will **contact** the On Call Manager. They will, in turn, contact the member of staff and advise them accordingly.

#### 4.2. Emergency Outgoing Calls

Staff must not use phones for personal use except in circumstances where the duties of a staff member affects their personal plans *(i.e. required to work longer than the originally agreed shift, late leaving duty, attendance at an emergency meeting etc.)* then staff may use the home phone to contact a family member or friend to advise them accordingly.

### 5. Mobile Phones

#### 5.1. Service Users

- Unless they choose otherwise each service user will have a Pay as You Go mobile phone for use in activities or emergencies.

- When a mobile phone has been purchased on behalf of/or by a service user, a protocol must be in place outlining the use of the mobile phone. *(Where service user can manage their own phone the protocol will state self manage and this procedure does not apply).*
• Wherever possible only mobile phones which provide itemised bills will be purchased

• Where a service user lacks capacity in the use of their mobile phone the Manager will be responsible for the safe keeping of the phone and monitor its use. Bills where available will be dated and signed by the Manager once checked.

• For “Pay as You Go” tariffs a record of the use of the phone will be kept on the “Pay as You Go” Record Sheet (Appendix A).

• “Top Up” Cards – Where “Top Up” Cards are used these will be recorded and monitored by the Manager.

• It is the responsibility of the staff member supporting the service user to enter the use of the mobile phone on the “Pay as You Go” Record.

• Purchase of “Top Up” Cards will be treated as a service user purchase and will be recorded in accordance with the Future Directions Finance Procedure.

5.2. Staff

Staff personal mobile phones must be switched off when on duty.

5.3. Exceptions to the Rule

It is acknowledged that certain occasions may arise when telephone calls need to be made/received at work by staff. It is only in these exceptional circumstances, e.g. illness of family member, pregnancy related issues, where staff are permitted to use their mobile phone whilst at work (also see Section 4.1). In such circumstances permission must first be sought from the Manager if on duty. In their absence permission must be sought from the Operational Network Manager or On Call.

NB: Staff are reminded that when they are at work they are in someone else's home. Mobile phones may interfere with direct support and care and may even irritate or upset people.

Staff within community services who are on an on call rota will be issued with mobile phones belonging to Future Directions CIC. When staff receive the phones, they will sign an agreement that they will use the phone for Company business only and will return it when they finish working for Future Directions CIC or when asked to do so.

Phones should be on at all times when at work and when on call. Misuse of the phone could lead to disciplinary action being taken.

NB: Privately owned mobile phones remain the property of the owner. If lost, broken or stolen whilst on duty Future Directions CIC accepts no responsibility.
6. Legislation Compliance Requirements

6.1. Handheld Mobile Phones and Driving

Under the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations 2003 it is illegal for a person driving a motor vehicle on a road to use a handheld mobile phone.

Future Directions CIC does not require or expect staff to make or receive handheld mobile phone calls whilst driving, therefore, staff are required to switch off mobile phones whilst driving.

Employees should not use a handheld mobile phone while they are driving, stopped at traffic lights, in a traffic jam or during any other hold up.

**NB:** Employees should note that a handheld mobile phone consisting of a wire and an earpiece by itself is not a hands free mobile phone, and therefore, an employee should not use such a mobile phone while they are driving.

6.2. Other Handheld Devices and Driving

Under the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations 2003, it is illegal for a person driving a motor vehicle on a road to use a handheld device (except a two-way radio) which performs an interactive communication function by transmitting and receiving data.

An interactive communication function includes sending or receiving oral or written messages, sending or receiving facsimile documents, sending or receiving still or moving images, and providing access to the Internet.

Future Directions CIC does not require or expect staff to send or receive oral or written messages, sending or receiving facsimile documents, sending or receiving still or moving images, and providing access to the Internet. Staff are required to switch off such devices whilst driving.

If an employee’s handheld device receives data while they are driving, stopped at traffic lights, in a traffic jam or during any other hold up, they should respond to the receipt of such data when they are safely parked (i.e. when the engine of their motor vehicle is switched off).
Telephone Owner: ____________________________________________ Telephone Number: _____________________________________________

Address: ______________________________________________________________________________________________________

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