



Belong To LGBTQ+
Youth Ireland

Youth E-Safety and Acceptable Use Policy

Belong To LGBTQ+ Youth Ireland

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REVISION HISTORY

Revision	Date of Release	Purpose
V1.0	October 2026	Initial release

1. INTRODUCTION

Belong To LGBTQ+ Youth Ireland (“Belong To”) recognises the digitisation of the youth work sector and youth work practice, and is committed to proactively using digital media and technology as a youth work practice tool to engage young people.

E-safety is central to our approach to digital youth work. E-safety is the collective term for safeguarding involving the use of mobile phones, computers (including laptops, tablets, etc.), games consoles and other electronic devices to communicate and access the internet, emails, text messages, instant messaging, social networking sites and other social media.

2. SCOPE

This policy covers all digital youth work, which means all digital tools used to communicate with young people or used as tool in our youth work practice.

3. PURPOSE

This policy is intended to inform and equip Belong To’s youth workers and volunteers on ensuring E-safety and the acceptable use of online and social media platforms. It aims to ensure a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all young people engaging with digital resources in our service.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Senior Leadership

- The **Director of Operations and Governance** will ensure that suitable and appropriate filtering and monitoring systems are in place.
- The **Director of Operations and Governance** will monitor the safety and security of the organisation’s systems and networks.
- The **Director of Youth Services** will ensure that E- safety is embedded within Belong To’s youth work practice.
- The **SLT** will ensure the Youth Services Department has sufficient resources to fulfil their E-safety responsibilities.
- The **Director of Youth Services** will ensure there are robust reporting channels for concerns relating to online safety.

- The **Director of Youth Services** will ensure that risk assessments are undertaken regarding the safe use of technology in our youth work practice.

4.2 Designated Liaison Person

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) will:

- Act as the names point of contact on all online safeguarding issues and liaise with other staff or other agencies, as appropriate.
- Keep up to date with current research, legislation and trends regarding online safety and communicate this with the Youth Services Department and Volunteers.
- Ensure that youth workers and volunteers receive regular, up-to-date and appropriate E-safety training.
- Maintain records of E-safety concerns, as well as actions taken, as part of the organisation's safeguarding recording mechanisms.
- Report E-safety concerns, as appropriate, to the SMT and Board.

4.3 All Staff and Volunteers

All staff and volunteers must:

- Take responsibility for the security of the organisation's systems and the data they use or have access to.
- Embed E-safety in all digital youth work practice.
- Have an awareness of E-safety issues and how they may be experienced by the young people accessing our services.
- Identify E-safety concerns and take appropriate action.
- Report all E-safety incidents, issues and concerns to the Director of Youth Services and the Director of Operations and Governance.

4.4 Young People in Belong To

The young people in Belong To have a responsibility to:

- Obey Belong To's E-Safety and Acceptable Use Rules.
- Respect the feelings and rights of others both on and offline.
- Take responsibility for keeping themselves and others safe online.
- Seek help from a Belong To youth worker or other trusted adult if they have a concern online, and support others that may be experiencing E-safety issues.

5. ACCEPTABLE USE

Young people at Belong To are welcome to use computers for positive, purposeful activities such as:

- Learning, research, and educational tasks
- Creative expression (e.g., writing, design, coding)
- Accessing support services and helpful resources
- Respectful communication with peers and staff
- Exploring identity and community in safe, affirming digital space

6. UNACCEPTABLE USE

To keep our space safe and respectful, the following actions are not allowed:

- Viewing or sharing explicit, violent, or hateful content
- Engaging in cyberbullying, harassment, or discrimination
- Installing or downloading software without permission
- Trying to bypass security filters or settings
- Sharing personal information (like addresses or phone numbers) without consent
- Using computers for illegal purposes
- Damaging, altering, or misusing computer equipment or software.

7. COMPUTER AND INTERNET RULES

To protect everyone's safety and privacy:

- All computer and internet use must be supervised by a trained youth worker or volunteer
- Native web-filtering tools are enabled to block adult or inappropriate online content.
- Content restrictions are applied to ensure only age-appropriate apps, media, and online interactions are accessible.
- Uploading or downloading unapproved software is not allowed
- Viewing manipulated or inappropriate images is prohibited
- Screensavers and account settings must not be changed and are locked by password.
- Passwords must remain private and unchanged
- Good "netiquette" (online manners) must be followed at all times

- Belong To's Code of Conduct applies online just as it does in person
- Copyright laws must be respected - don't use content without permission
- Visiting websites with obscene, illegal, or hateful material is strictly forbidden.
- Downloading tools that override security systems is not allowed.
- Online shopping is not permitted on Belong To computers.
- Social media and messaging platforms may only be accessed with permission from a youth worker.
- Chat rooms, forums, and other online communication tools require express permission and supervision by trained staff.

8. SUPERVISION OF COMPUTER USE

To ensure a safe and supportive environment:

- A staff member or trained volunteer must be present while computers are in use.
- Computers should only be used in designated areas.
- Staff will monitor activity discreetly to protect privacy while ensuring safety.
- Any concerns about online behaviour will be addressed promptly.

9. ONLINE SAFETY ADVICE

We encourage young people to stay safe online by:

- Using strong, unique passwords and keeping them private.
- Thinking carefully before sharing personal information.
- Reporting any uncomfortable or unsafe online experiences to staff.
- Avoiding suspicious links or unknown downloads.
- Respecting others' privacy and boundaries.
- Remembering that online actions have real-life consequences.
- When using a shared computer at Belong To, make sure you sign out of all your accounts.

10. SANCTIONS FOR MISUSE

If a young person violates this policy, the following steps may be taken:

1. **Verbal Warning** – Staff explains the issue and reminds the young person of the policy.

2. **Temporary Restriction** – Limited access to computers for a set period.
3. **Formal Review** – Meeting with staff and guardians (if appropriate) to discuss behaviour.
4. **Suspension of Access** – Loss of computer privileges for a longer duration
5. **Referral** – In serious cases, referral to external support or safeguarding services.

Sanctions will be applied fairly, consistently, and with a focus on education and restoration.

11. POLICY REVIEW AND FEEDBACK

This policy will be reviewed regularly and updated as needed. Young people are invited to share feedback to help shape a safe and empowering digital environment.