Online Safety Policy
This is a non-contractual policy

Created: September 2021
Review date: September 2023
Approved by CEO & Board Trustees

Purpose of policy

The Matthew Project works with children, families and vulnerable adults as part of its activities.

The purpose of this policy statement is to:
- Ensure the safety and wellbeing of our clients whilst they are using the internet, social media or mobile devices
- Provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to online safety
- Ensure that, as an organisation, we operate in line with our values and within the law in terms of how we use online devices.

The policy statement applies to all staff, volunteers, clients and anyone involved in The Matthew Project's activities.

Legal framework

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in England. Summaries of key legislation and guidance are available online.

We believe that:
- Children, young people and vulnerable adults should never experience abuse of any kind
- Children should be able to use the internet for education and personal development, but safeguards need to be in place to ensure they are kept safe at all times.

We recognise that:
- The online world provide everyone with many opportunities; however it can also present risks and challenges
- We have a duty to ensure that all children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in our organsiation are protected from potential harm online.
- We can help support keeping our clients safe online, whether or not they are using the Matthew Project's network and devices
- All clients, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promotion young people's welfare and in helping young people to be responsible in their approach to online safety.

We will seek to keep clients safe by:
- appointing an online safety coordinator [our Safeguarding Lead]
- providing clear and specific directions to staff and volunteers on how to behave online through our code of conduct

- supporting and encouraging our clients using our service to use the internet, social media and mobile phones in a way that keeps them safe and shows respect for others
- supporting and encouraging parents and carers to do what they can to keep their children safe online
- developing clear and robust procedures to enable us to respond appropriately to any incidents of inappropriate online behaviour, whether by an adult or a child/young person
- reviewing and updating the security of our information systems regularly
- ensuring that usernames, logins, email accounts and passwords are used effectively
- ensuring personal information about the adults and children who are involved in our organisation is held securely and shared only as appropriate
- ensuring that images of children, young people and families are used only after their written permission has been obtained, and only for the purpose for which consent has been given
- providing support and training for staff and volunteers about online safety
- examining and risk assessing any social media platforms and new technologies before they are used within the organisation.

If online abuse occurs, we will respond to it by:
- having clear and robust safeguarding procedures in place for responding to abuse (including online abuse)
- providing support and training for all staff and volunteers on dealing with all forms of abuse, including bullying/cyberbullying, emotional abuse, sexting, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation
- making sure our response takes the needs of the person experiencing abuse, any bystanders and our organisation as a whole into account
- develop a plan to address online abuse and review this regularly to ensure that any problems have been resolved in the long term.

This policy statement should be read alongside our organisational policies and procedures, including our safeguarding policies, code of conduct and IT usage.