New Opportunities for Community & Support (NOCS) charity: Communications, Email and Internet Policy

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1.1 This Communications, Email, and Internet Policy applies to all trustees, employees, volunteers, contractors, and agents of New Opportunities for Community and Support, a charity with registered number 1174878, whose primary office is at 27 Salisbury Street, Blandford Forum, DT11 7AU ("the Charity") who may from time to time be authorised to use the communications equipment, computers, devices, and systems provided by the Charity ("Users").

1.2 Individuals may only be authorised as Users by either a trustee of the Charity or its General Manager.

1.3 In light of the fact that communications made by Users and their other activities online reflect upon the Charity and are capable of creating a number of commercial, professional, and legal problems, this Policy is intended to clarify what the Charity expects from Users and their responsibilities when using the Charity's communications, email, and internet facilities (collectively, "the Charity's Internet and Communication Facilities").

1.4 The Charity's Internet and Communication Facilities may include:

1.4.1 Telephone;

1.4.2 Fax;

1.4.3 Email;

1.4.4 Internet.

1.5 **T**he Charity's Internet and Communications Facilities are made available to volunteers as expressly authorised by the Trustees or the General Manager for the purposes of the business of the Charity, no personal use is permitted.

1.6 In addition to this Policy, when using the Charity's Internet and Communications Facilities, Users must also comply with other Charity Policies.

2. General Principles

There are certain general principles that should be borne in mind when using any type of communication, be it external or internal, including hard copy letters, memos, and notices. The Charity expects all Users to:

2.1 Use the Charity's Internet and Communication Facilities, and non-electronic facilities including but not limited to Charity letterheads and stationery, responsibly and professionally and at all times in accordance with their duties;

2.2 Be mindful of what constitutes confidential or restricted information and ensure that such information is never disseminated in the course of communications

without express authority;

2.3 Be mindful of what constitutes personal data and ensure that personal data is never disseminated in the course of communications unless it is used in accordance with the Charity's Data Protection Policy and with express authority;

2.4 Ensure that they do not breach any copyright or other intellectual property right when making communications;

2.5 Ensure that they do not bind themselves or the Charity to any agreement without express authority to do so; and

2.6 Be mindful of the fact that any communication may be required to be relied upon in court, to the advantage or the detriment of the individual or the Charity, and to conduct their use of communication systems and equipment accordingly.

2.7 The viewing, transmission, downloading, uploading, or accessing in any way of any of the following material using the Charity's Internet and Communications Facilities will amount to gross misconduct with the possibility of summary dismissal:

2.7.1 Material which is pornographic, sexist, racist, homophobic, or any other discriminatory or otherwise offensive material;

2.7.2 Illegal or criminal material, including material which breaches copyright or any other intellectual property right;

2.7.3 Any material which has the object or effect of causing harassment to the recipient;

2.7.4 Material which the User knows, or reasonably ought to know, is confidential or restricted information and which they are not authorised to deal with;

3. Internet Use

3.1 The Charity provides access to the internet for the sole purpose of its business and to assist Users in the performance of their duties. Users may be asked to justify the amount of time they have spent on the internet or the sites they have visited.

3.2 Users must not use the internet to gain or attempt to gain unauthorised access to computer material or private databases, including restricted areas of the Charity's network. Nor must they intentionally or recklessly introduce any form of malware, spyware, virus, or other malicious software or code to the communications equipment or systems of the Charity.

3.3 Users must not access or attempt to access any information which they know or reasonably ought to know is confidential or restricted.

3.4 Users must not access or use personal data online in any manner that is inconsistent with the Charity's Data Protection Policy.

3.5 Users must not download or install any software without the express permission of a Trustee or the General Manager.

3.6 In accordance with paragraph 2.7, Users must not attempt to download, view, or otherwise retrieve illegal, pornographic, sexist, racist, offensive, or any other material which is in any way in bad taste or immoral. Users should note that even material that is legal under UK law may nonetheless be in sufficiently bad taste to fall within this definition. As a general rule, if any person might be offended by any content, or if that material may be a source of embarrassment to the Charity or otherwise tarnish the Charity's image, viewing that material will constitute a breach of this Policy. Any such attempt will constitute a disciplinary offence and in addition to internet access being reviewed, reduced, or withdrawn, may be subject to disciplinary action or summary dismissal (if an employee) or temporary or permanent exclusion from Charity premises or events.

4. Social Media Use

4.1 Users may not use social media for personal purposes at any time via the Charity's Internet and Communication Facilities or on computers, mobile devices, or other communications equipment belonging to themselves via the Charity network, except in accordance with clause 4.2.

4.2 Certain Users may from time to time be required to use social media on behalf of the Charity. Users should only do so with the authorisation of a trustee of the Charity or the General Manager.

4.3 The Charity recognises that in their private lives Users may wish to publish content on the internet through a variety of means, including social media. Even outside of work Users must refrain from doing anything on social media or any other websites that defames, disparages, or otherwise brings into disrepute, the Charity, a User's superiors, a User's colleagues, or other related third parties. This includes, but is not limited to, making false or misleading statements and impersonating colleagues or third parties.

4.4 If a User makes any posting, contribution, or creation or publishes any other content which identifies or could identify the User as an employee, contractor, agent, or other member or associate of the Charity, or in which the User discusses their work or experiences relating to the Charity, the User must at all times ensure that their conduct is appropriate and consistent with their contract of employment and the corporate image of the Charity, and should bear in mind that the User owes a duty of fidelity to the Charity.

4.5 If a User is unsure as to the appropriateness of a posting or other content they wish to publish, they should speak to the General Manager or a trustee of the Charity at the earliest opportunity to seek clarification.

4.6 If, in any contribution or posting which identifies or could identify the User as an employee, agent, or other affiliate of the Charity, the User expresses an idea or opinion, they should include a disclaimer which clearly states that the opinion or

idea expressed is that of the User and does not represent that of the Charity.

5. Charity Email Use

5.1 Users should adopt the following points as part of best practice:

5.1.1 Before communicating via email, Users should satisfy themselves that it is the most suitable mode of communication, particularly where time is of the essence;

5.1.2 All emails should contain the appropriate business reference(s), either in the subject line or in the body of the text;

5.1.3 Emails should be worded appropriately and in the same professional manner as if they were a letter;

5.1.4 Users should be careful not to copy an email automatically to everyone copied in to the original message to which they are responding as this may result in inappropriate or unlawful disclosure of confidential information and/or personal data;

5.1.5 Users should take care with the content of emails, in particular avoiding incorrect or improper statements and the unauthorised inclusion of confidential information or personal data. Failure to follow this point may lead to claims for discrimination, harassment, defamation, breach of contract, breach of confidentiality, or personal data breaches;

5.1.6 All emails should be proof read before transmission, which includes ensuring that any attachments referred to in the text are actually attached and are correct and the intended recipients' email addresses are correct;

5.1.7 If an important document is transmitted via email, the sender should telephone the recipient to confirm that the document has been received in full;

5.2 Users must not send abusive, obscene, discriminatory, racist, harassing, derogatory, pornographic, or otherwise inappropriate material in emails. If any User feels that they have been or are being harassed or bullied, or if they are offended by material received in an email from another User, they should inform the General Manager or a Charity trustee.

5.3 Users should at all times remember that email messages may have to be disclosed as evidence for any court proceedings or investigations by regulatory bodies and may therefore be prejudicial to both their and the Charity's interests. Users should remember that data which appears to have been deleted is often recoverable.

6. Charity Telephone System Use

6.1 The Charity's telephone lines are for the exclusive use by Users working on the

Charity's business..

6.2 If the Charity discovers that the telephone system has been used for personal calls, this may be treated as a disciplinary matter and will be handled in accordance with the Charity's disciplinary procedures.

7. Security

7.1 The integrity of the Charity's business relies on the security of the Charity's Internet and Communications Facilities. Users bear the responsibility of preserving the security of Charity's Internet and Communications Facilities through careful and cautious use.

7.2 Users must not download or install any software or program without the express permission of the General Manager or, in his absence, a trustee, and are reminded of paragraphs 3.2 and 3.5 of this Policy.

7.3 Users must not delete, destroy, or otherwise modify any part of the Charity's Internet and Communications Facilities (including, but not limited to, hardware and software) without the express permission of the General Manager or a trustee.

7.4 Users must not share any password that they use for accessing the Charity's Internet and Communications Facilities with any person, other than when it is necessary for maintenance or repairs and with express authority from the General Manager or a trustee. Users are reminded that it is good practice to change passwords regularly.

7.5 Users must ensure that confidential information, personal data, and other sensitive information is kept secure. The security of personal data in particular is governed by the Charity's Data Protection Policy, which Users must comply with at all times when handling personal data. Workstations and screens should be locked when the User is away from the machine and hard copy files and documents should be secured when not in use.

7.6 When opening email from external sources Users must exercise caution in light of the risk of malware, spyware, viruses, and other malicious software or code pose to system security. Users should always ensure that they know what an attachment is before opening it. If a User suspects that their computer has been affected by a virus they must contact the General Manager immediately.

7.7 No equipment or device that has not been issued by the Charity may be connected to or used in conjunction with the Charity's Internet and Communications Facilities without the prior express permission of the General Manager. Such permission may be conditional on the testing and/or inspection of the equipment or device in question.

8. Monitoring

8.1 To the extent permitted or required by law, the Charity may monitor Users' use of the Charity's Internet and Communications Facilities for its legitimate business purposes which include (but are not necessarily limited to) the following reasons:

8.1.1 To ensure Charity policies and guidelines are followed, and standards of service are maintained;

8.1.2 To comply with any legal obligation;

8.1.3 To investigate and prevent the unauthorised use of the Charity's Internet and Communications Facilities and maintain security;

8.1.4 If the Charity suspects that a User has been viewing or sending offensive or illegal material (or material that is otherwise in violation of this Policy);

8.1.5 If the Charity suspects that a User has been spending an excessive amount of time using the Charity's Internet and Communications Facilities for personal purposes.

9. Recruitment

The Charity may use internet searches to carry out due diligence as part of its recruitment process. In these circumstances, the Charity will act in accordance with its equal opportunities and data protection obligations.

10. Misuse and Compliance

10.1 Any User found to be misusing the Charity's Internet and Communications Facilities will be treated in line with the Charity's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. Misuse of the internet can, in some cases, amount to a criminal offence.

10.2 Where any evidence of misuse of the Charity's Internet and Communications Facilities is found, the Charity may undertake an investigation into the misuse in accordance with the Charity's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. If criminal activity is suspected or found, the Charity may hand over relevant information to the police in connection with a criminal investigation.

11. **Relationship with Other Policies**

Communications and Internet overlaps with other policies. These include:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Volunteer Policy

12. **Approval and Review**

Policy agreed	25th October 2023
Next review	October 2025

New Opportunities for Community and Support in partnership with Noc's Box