

# Musinc Communications Policy

This policy has been created to set out, and clarify, the communications procedures and protocols relating to self-employed music leaders carrying out work on behalf of Musinc.

Musinc relies on cross sector partnership working to effectively deliver its programme. Due to the disparities in procedures and processes between sectors (e.g. formal education and youth organisations) Musinc have created this policy to set out its own expectations relating to communications between its staff, music leaders and young people.

## Communication principles

- Simple language – The language used in communication should be simple and easily understandable.
- Respect - Use language that doesn't hurt or offend anyone, and keep up-to-date with evolving vocabulary
- Clarity – The subject-matter, which is to be communicated, must be clear. Ambiguous terms should be avoided so that the purpose of communication is not deviated.
- Diplomacy – We want to support the voices of the young people we work with, to speak out on social issues. But we're also funded by Youth Music and ACE, so we need to stay neutral on party politics.
- Reciprocal communication – Communications should allow for a two-way flow.
- Consistency – communications are in accordance with our policies and procedures and are driven by the programme objectives
- The correct channel – The communicator should select the proper medium by considering such factors as the nature of matter to be communicated, urgency of communication, distance between the communicator and the recipient etc.
- Time – be aware that when communicating, especially information that the recipient may not be expecting, that people need time to process the message. Be aware of leaving adequate time for processing and responding.
- Empathy – Put ourselves in the position of the person reading/looking at/listening to the communications, and try to understand how they might be interpreting the message.

## WHEN COMMUNICATING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE:

Music leaders and Musinc staff will adopt a professional and appropriate manner when communicating with young people including:

- Active listening – making a conscious effort to hear not only the words, but the complete message.
- Language
  - o be yourself, speak as normally as you would to anyone else

- keep language appropriate and respectful.
- avoid workplace jargon or acronyms that they may not understand.
- be sensitive to race, disability, gender or sexuality. Even if you don't consider a term offensive, a young person might. Even words that we use to describe circumstances may be viewed as negative by young people e.g. avoid words like 'vulnerable' and 'at risk' in front of young people.
- Body language
  - Keep your body language open and non-threatening.
  - Avoid pointing or jabbing your finger.
  - Smile and look around at the young people you're talking with.
  - Crouch down or sit so you're on the same level, not standing over them.
  - If sitting, lean forward to show you're interested. Though be careful not to get too close – everyone likes some personal space.
  - When young people are talking, show you're paying attention by looking at them, nodding, repeating their points back or asking questions.
  - When you're talking, try and engage everyone in the conversation, not just the most vocal young people.
- Be open whilst maintaining boundaries
  - Be aware that young people be try to overstep the boundaries. Politely telling them that their question is personal, or the topic is private, is usually enough to show they have overstepped the mark.
  - Try changing the subject or directing the question back to them if a young person asks you something that makes you feel uncomfortable
- Empathising with the child's point of view
- Understanding non-verbal communication
  - Be aware that young people from some cultural backgrounds may regard eye contact as rude, or be silent as a mark of respect.
- Building rapport. Using humour is a good way to build rapport.
  - It takes time to build trust – some young people may not want to may not want to talk or share their story until they've met you a few times.
- Giving feedback in a clear way
- Understanding and explaining the boundaries of confidentiality.
- Believe that children are competent and can contribute effectively to assessment, decision making and planning
- Have realistic expectations of the time it takes to communicate effectively with young people

## **COMMUNICATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE OUTSIDE OF MUSINC ACTIVITY**

- Music leaders should not give their personal contact details to young people under any circumstances (including personal telephone number or personal email address).

- Music leaders should not seek to communicate or respond with young people outside of the purposes of work.
- If communication with a young person is required for work purposes, this must be undertaken through Musinc. For example, if a young person has been absent and needs to be informed of transport arrangements for a music event, the music leader must inform Musinc, and Musinc would be responsible for contacting the young person through their parent/guardian directly.
- Any form of communication made outside of work with parents or young people in relation to private tuition arrangements external to musinc must be agreed with parents/guardians (see further information below)
- Refrain from any social contact or personal communication with young people or parents outside of the workplace.
- Information about any planned social contact with pupils or parents outside of project time, for example for tutoring or an additional performance opportunity, should always be shared with Musinc prior to the arrangement / event.
- Music leaders must inform Musinc of any relationship with a parent which extends beyond the usual parent/professional relationship and of any arrangements where parents wish to use music leaders' professional services outside of project time, e.g. private instrumental tuition.
- If you unintentionally see a young person out in public, avoid making conversation unless the young person addresses you first and you feel it an appropriate situation to do so. If you see a young person in a bar or social space involving alcohol, we advise that you leave the venue in order to maintain professional boundaries.

#### **COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN MUSINC PROJECT MANAGEMENT STAFF AND MUSIC LEADERS AND/OR PARTNER ORGANISATIONS WORKING WITH MUSINC**

- The Musinc programme is hosted by Middlesbrough Council, as part of this agreement you have no authority (and shall not hold yourself out as having authority) to act on behalf of Middlesbrough Council / Musinc in relation to planning, administration or organisation of any project activity outside of the scope of the criteria detailed in your agreement, unless you have specific confirmation that you may do so, in writing in advance.
- You must not bind Middlesbrough Council / Musinc to any activity or service unless we have specifically permitted this in writing in advance, and you must refer any external enquiries or requests for musinc services through to musinc project management staff.
- You must not at any point hold yourself out as representing Musinc either in verbal or written communication or by physical representation outside of the scope of the work, or outside of the times and dates of work as outlined within your agreement. This includes the use and wearing of Musinc ID Badges and Musinc T-shirts which must only

be done during delivery of work that you are engaged to carry out on behalf of Musinc and at no other time.

- As a self-employed musician, you may be asked by parent or guardian of a child/young person to tutor them on a private basis, following your initial engagement with them through musinc projects. It must be made clear that this work is not part of the scope of Musinc and that the individual is working independently with their own safeguarding procedures and private agreement with the young person's parent / guardian.
- If the parent/guardian of the young person requests references or DBS information from Musinc we are permitted to share this information to enable safeguarding of the young person.
- You must not carry out work for musinc without a written agreement outlining the work. If a written agreement cannot be provided in advance, for example in the event of emergency cover, you may carry out the work as long as suitable and detailed alternative written consent from Musinc project management staff has been provided, e.g. by email.

## **WORKING HOURS**

The Musinc project management team work during normal working hours and are contactable Monday to Friday 9.30am – 5pm. Please be aware of what is considered a realistic timescale for staff to respond to enquiries and carry out tasks, and bear in mind that working patterns are flexible and the staff will respond to your query as soon as they are able.