
Internet Use: Service Users in Residential Care Policy

This policy sets out the approach of MKEC on the access to, accessibility of and use by service users of all internet facilities, including:

- web browsing
- email
- messaging
- video calling
- social media.

It applies to use of MKEC's facilities and users' own privately funded devices and connectivity.

It should be read and used in relation to the policies on [staff internet use](#) and social media.

Scope of Policy

1. A description of the internet facilities available to service users is included in the home's prospectus.
2. The use of the facilities and any charges are set out in the service user's contract/terms and conditions of service.
3. MKEC allows service users to have [free/charged] access to the internet using its Wi-Fi connectivity for their private use.
4. MKEC also makes available its own devices (tablets, computers), which allow service users access to the internet by accessing the service's network.
5. Service users may also use their own privately purchased devices (including smartphone, tablet or computer) and connectivity (ie mobile broadband).
6. Where service users make their own arrangements for internet access, eg using mobile broadband, they are responsible for all costs incurred.

Charges

MKEC's charges for connectivity to and use of the internet are stated in the service user's statement of terms and conditions/contract under the heading of "additional charges". These describe what MKEC has agreed to provide.

Internet Use

1. MKEC allows and encourages service users to use its Wi-Fi access points provided that usage does not incur significant financial costs to the care provider and take up significant amounts of administrative time, eg in troubleshooting or teaching people use of their devices.
2. Individual service users who need help with getting their equipment to work or in learning how to use the internet will be given the appropriate help and support through their care arrangements and support plans and educational activities.

Use of Shared Computers

The home operates a booking scheme for service users who want to use one of the home's shared computers. A service user can use a shared computer at any time that has not been booked for that time, but an agreed booking will always take priority. Bookings are in 30-minute slots.

Monitoring of Use

1. The care provider requires its service users to agree to its monitoring of their general use of the internet facilities it makes available, so that it can make sure the facilities are operating efficiently and that provider is compliant with its statutory obligations on data protection and security.
2. Service users found in breach of the agreed terms and conditions on internet use, eg by compromising the system's security, illegal file sharing or downloading piracy will be considered to be in breach of their terms and conditions of service and subject to corresponding action eg by having access to the provider's internet facilities withdrawn.
3. In cases where it is found or suspected that service users have been engaging in internet crime, eg by downloading indecent images of children, engaging in hate crimes or abusing other service users by way of social media, MKEC will report the matter directly to the local safeguarding adults authority and possibly police for further action.
4. The service will always be fair and proportionate in any actions it takes against misuse of the internet facilities by using a tariff of warnings and notices. As a last resort the service might ask the user to leave on the basis of having breached the terms and conditions of their contract.

Procedures on Internet Use

MKEC accepts that its service users have the right to make use of the internet as any other citizen with their rights to privacy and confidentiality of the information they receive and communicate fully respected.

However, MKEC is also mindful of its duty of care to make sure no one is harmed as a result of inappropriate or illegal use of the internet by its service users.

It therefore recognises that it has a duty to protect vulnerable service users from both causing harm to other people, particularly other service users, through their inappropriate or illegal use of the internet and social media, and from harming themselves by engaging inappropriately or illegally in internet activity.

Therefore service users are required to agree to the following basic rules of internet use.

1. Keep online identities confidential to themselves by not revealing or sharing passwords and usernames and by never using other people's identities, where known.
2. Report to their key worker/the care home management whenever they consider that their online identities have been compromised, particularly as this might have security implications for the network as a whole.
3. Where using a shared device or computer always log on and off using their personal security so as to preserve the privacy and confidentiality of their information.
4. Even if access is possible, never go into other people's files or documents without permission.
5. Do not visit websites that contain obscene, illegal, hateful or otherwise objectionable materials.
6. Staff or service users who become aware of other service users visiting such sites or downloading illegal material should report the matter straight away to the service's management for further investigation.
7. Service users should never send or receive any material that is illegal, obscene, racist, hateful, defamatory or that is intended to annoy or intimidate another person. If they do they could be subject to criminal investigation or, where the target is other service users, Local Safeguarding Adults Board procedures.
8. Service users should not use social networking sites, such as Twitter or Facebook, to make public adverse comments about MKEC, its staff or other service users. If they have a complaint about the service they should use the service's complaints procedure.
9. They should never arrange face-to-face meetings with someone or people they know only through emails, social media or chatrooms without discussing the matter beforehand with support staff so that a full risk assessment can be carried out.
10. Service users who use the service's shared computers must not alter filter or security settings.

Internet Shopping, Subscriptions and Financial Transactions

1. Service users have the right to purchase items on the internet or engage in other financial transactions using their debit or credit cards and may do so confidentially and privately as they would purchase items in other ways.
2. They are responsible for their transactions and any financial difficulties encountered as a result, though the home will always provide advice and support to help them resolve any problems.
3. The home's approach to online purchases and the risks of abuse and exploitation that they pose is in line with the Mental Capacity Act, which indicates that the taking of an unwise decision does not necessarily mean that the person lacks the mental capacity to take that decision.
4. The home will do all that it reasonably can to safeguard its service users from taking unwise financial decisions, but recognises that it cannot always prevent its service users, who otherwise have full capacity, from exercising their rights to spend their money as they wish.
5. Any agreement reached with a service user allowing the home to help with the management of their online financial behaviour will therefore be on a voluntary basis, with the person's full consent and entered on their plan of care.
6. The home will carry out "best interests" assessments for any service user thought to lack the mental capacity to take financial decisions and vulnerable to financial harm as a result of their lack of mental capacity. In engaging in this process it recognises that the outcome will depend on individual circumstances.
7. The home recognises that the addressing of any of the issues arising from service users' use of the internet to make purchases to take out subscriptions will need to be done on an individual basis.

Training

All staff are instructed in the service's internet policies and are made aware of the importance of the safeguarding implications of any breaches of the policy.

Review

Signed: _IUKELEGHE

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Policy review date: _09/04/2025
