Brainwave WhatsApp Community Policy & Guidelines

1. Purpose

This policy outlines how Brainwave WhatsApp Community will be used to support families of Brainwave. It sets expectations for all participants to ensure a safe, respectful and supportive environment. It will also cover Brainwave's commitment to privacy by protecting personal data and in accordance with UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

2. Aims of the WhatsApp Community

The WhatsApp Community aims to:

- Provide families with meaningful information, resources, updates, and opportunities in a timely manner.
- Encourage peer support and connections among families with similar experiences and needs.
- Complement existing communication channels such as email, Padlet, and in-person support.

3. Structure

- Brainwave WhatsApp Community will be managed through a dedicated Brainwave WhatsApp Business account.
- Only the Family Support staff members may add parents to the Community or sub-groups.
- Community members will be limited to eligible Brainwave families who have completed the consent process.
- Brainwave WhatsApp Community will be organised into multiple groups (e.g. by local area or specific needs/diagnosis).
- Each group will be overseen by the Family Support team to ensure appropriate moderation and support.

4. Participation

Participation in any WhatsApp group is:

- Voluntary - families choose whether to join.
- Consent based - only individuals who have completed the Brainwave WhatsApp Community Consent Form will be added to groups.
- Members can engage as much or as little as they choose.
- Families may withdraw consent at any time by leaving the group or contacting the Family Support team. Brainwave will then remove them from the relevant group and update its records accordingly

5. Data Protection and Privacy

Brainwave is the data controller and is committed to protecting personal data in accordance with UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 as outlined in the organisation's main Privacy Policy.

Important considerations for WhatsApp groups:

- Phone numbers and display names are visible to all group members.
- WhatsApp is a third-party messaging platform outside Brainwave's direct control.
- Members should not share personal, sensitive, or confidential information in the group chat.
- Members should not share group content outside the community (e.g. on social media).

Brainwave will:

- Use personal data (phone numbers and name) for the purpose of managing the WhatsApp Community.
- Use the dedicated WhatsApp Business account only for managing the Community and relevant family support communication.
- Store consent forms securely according to Brainwave's data storing regulations as outlined in the main Privacy Policy.
- Remove individuals from groups upon request, if consent is withdrawn or family are no longer on programme.
- Ensure data practices comply with legal requirements and internal data protection policies.

6. Community Guidelines

Community members will:

- Communicate respectfully, courteously and constructively.
- Share information that is relevant, appropriate and supportive.
- Avoid sharing personal or sensitive data about yourselves or others.
- Use initials rather than full names when referring to children to protect privacy.
- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of other members by not contacting them outside of the group unless they have given permission for you to do so.

7. Unacceptable Use

The following behaviours are not permitted within Brainwave WhatsApp groups:

- Sharing personal, sensitive, or identifiable information about any individual, including discussions relating to children's Brainwave programmes.
- Posting content that is offensive, discriminatory, abusive, or otherwise harmful.
- Sending spam, unrelated promotions, or any form of solicitation to members, whether within the group or via direct messages.
- Contacting members of the WhatsApp Community outside of the group without their prior consent.
- Sharing content from the WhatsApp group on public platforms or social media.
- Members must not provide advice that could be understood as medical, therapeutic, legal or professional advice.

Brainwave reserves the right to remove any member who does not adhere to these guidelines.

8. Moderation

Brainwave will actively moderate WhatsApp groups to ensure the community remains safe and supportive:

- Each group will have the Family Support Worker and the Family Support Facilitator assigned as administrators.
- Staff will monitor discussions regularly during working hours.
- Administrators may remove inappropriate content if it breaches this policy.
- Brainwave reserves the right to remove members who do not adhere to these guidelines.
- If concerns arise, staff will take further action in line with safeguarding procedures.

9. Safeguarding

Protecting the welfare of families and children is paramount:

- All staff administrators are required to remain vigilant for any safeguarding concerns or risks.
- Any safeguarding concerns identified within a WhatsApp group will be addressed promptly and in line with Brainwave's Safeguarding Policy.
- If necessary, issues may be escalated to statutory services or relevant authorities.

10. Reporting Concerns

If a member has concerns about behaviour, content, or any aspect of the WhatsApp Community:

- They should contact a Brainwave Family Support team member directly using provided contact details.
- Members may raise concerns confidentially.

11. Review and Updates

This policy will be reviewed regularly and updated as required to ensure it remains:

- Effective and fit for purpose
- Aligned with best practice and legal standards
- Reflective of family and organisational needs

The current version of this policy will be made available to families and staff.

Contact

You can decide not to receive communications or change how we contact you at any time. If you wish to do so, please contact us by emailing: data@brainwave.org.uk.

For questions, concerns, or privacy related enquiries about the WhatsApp Community, please contact the Family Support team via: elizabethphillips@brainwave.org.uk or Joannasladden@brainwave.org.uk