Home Office HYDRANT PROGRAMME VOOP

Safer Smartphone Programme

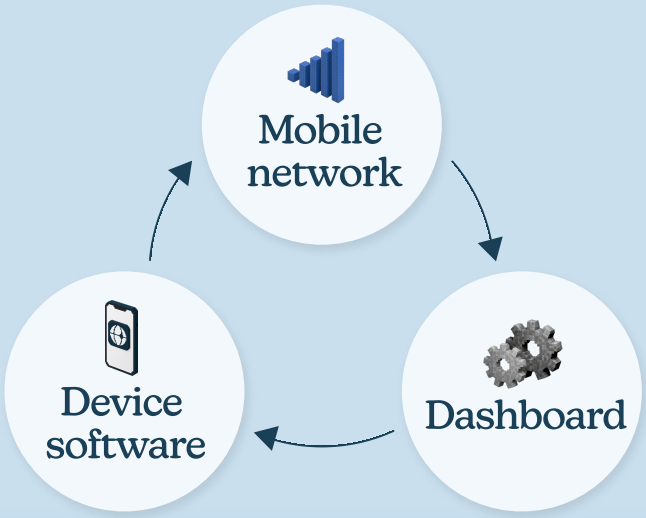
01. Introduction to the Safer Smartphone Programme and Voop
02. How to get started on the programme
03. How to nominate children and young people to join the programme
04. How to talk to children and young people about Voop

Welcome to Voop!

Safeguarding the children in your care from exploitation, including digital and online risk, already sits at the centre of your role and your Ofsted registration. The Home Office's Safeguarding Smartphones Programme, in partnership with Voop, offers a practical and funded solution to strengthen that safeguarding.

Voop provides safe smartphone controls for the care sector. We don't read messages, record activity, or break encryption, and we believe in being open with children about what Voop can see and do. As the guardian, it's your responsibility to obtain consent from the child, as well as anyone with parental responsibility for them, before using Voop. As part of this programme, we will occasionally ask you to complete a survey. This helps us to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme.

Voop has three parts that work together:



Mobile network

We supply the phone's calls, texts and data. It's a normal smartphone, but because we're the network provider, we can block unwanted calls and texts.

Device software

This locks the phone down: it can't be factory reset, the network can't be changed, and the Voop app can't be deleted.

Dashboard

The dashboard shows each phone's location, lets you manage what it can do, and how it's being used, all in one place for every young person in your care.

Introducing children and young people to Voop

Welcome to Voop!

Voop is the network that runs your phone. You can call, text and use data just like any other phone.

Because Voop looks after the network, we can stop unwanted calls and texts from ever reaching you.

Your phone also has some Voop settings built in, so it can't be wiped or messed about with, and the Voop app can't be removed. This is just to keep things working properly and keep you safe.

Your guardian can see where your phone is and check a few things about how it's being used. That's not about spying on you, it's so they can help keep you safe and be there for you if something's wrong. You always have control on sharing your location with your guardian, unless you go missing.

Before you started using Voop, your guardian should have talked to you about this and asked if you're happy to use it. You should understand what Voop can do and agree to it, it's your phone and your choice matters.

If you're ever not sure about something on your phone, just ask your guardian. That's what they're there for. We may sometimes ask you how you are finding Voop, this will help us to make this the best possible experience for you.



How to get children in care started on the programme

Nominate children to get them started with Voop!

Complete this form and we will reach out to arrange onboarding and training within 24 hours.

Click here to complete the form >



We offer the following guidance to local authorities, care providers, and practitioners when nominating young people for onboarding to the programme.

- ✓ The child **must** be under local authority care (section 20 or section 31)
- ✓ The child **must** live in either Greater Manchester or West Yorkshire
- ✓ The child **must** be exposed to the risk of exploitation in some form (this does not need to be a high or significant risk)
- ✓ The child's use of Voop **must** be a voluntary and consent-based decision (further information on obtaining consent is here)

Oversight of selection and impact of Voop phones for individual children should be provided at MACE panels, or similar local meetings. Voop phones do not mitigate against harm. Practitioners should manage all risk and harm as they would within their standard operating procedures as part of their day-to-day safeguarding and parental responsibility.

Here are some anonymised examples of children on the programme:

Sara, 13

Sara's cognitive age is assessed at around six or seven, so there are concerns she can't safely manage who she talks to or what she sees online. She currently refuses to hand in her phone overnight. The resulting prolonged use is disrupting her sleep, her education and her engagement with staff.

Andrea, 15

Andrea is vulnerable to grooming, exploitation, bullying and pressure to share personal information, images or her location online. Her low mood and attempted self-harm involving alcohol raise further concerns about her safety when away from home. She sometimes switches off location sharing, which leaves staff unable to confirm her whereabouts quickly when concerns arise.

Nick, 16

Nick has a history of forming relationships through social media, messaging apps and online communities, including with people never met in person. On occasion, Nick has arranged to meet some of these people face to face. This creates a risk of grooming, exploitation and harm from people who may not be who they say they are.

Getting started with on the Home Office's Safeguarding Smartphones Programme is really straightforward

For any child to join the programme, the corporate parent local authority must first agree to join the programme. The corporate parent local authority also reviews and approves each eligible child joining the programme too.

Here is the process:

01 The corporate parent local authority agrees to join the programme

02 Private providers and local authority safeguarding leads nominate an eligible child to join the programme, using this form

03 The details for the eligible child are shared with the corporate parent local authority to secure their agreement for that child

04 The nominated guardian (the person with direct safeguarding responsibility for the child) is reached out to and completes this form to confirm the details of the child and schedule onboarding

05 The guardian introduces Voop to the child and completes their consent-based obligations (as they hold parental responsibility) - further information on consent can be found here

06 The Voop smartphone is set up and sent to the guardian; training to use Voop is really straightforward - just watch this video and take a look at our documentation site!

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