



SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The range of Child Abuse definitions and concepts are now increasingly being seen in the digital world. As technology develops, the internet and its range of content services can be accessed through various devices. There has been a recent trend for children and young people to access such services over more mobile devices such as tablets, phones and gaming devices.
- 1.2 Communication technologies have become a significant tool in the creation and distribution of indecent photographs/pseudo photographs of children. Internet chat rooms, social networking sites, gaming sites, virtual worlds, instant messaging, discussion forums and bulletin boards are used as a means of contacting children and young people with a view to grooming them for inappropriate or abusive relationships. This may include requests to make and transmit pornographic images of themselves, or to perform sexual acts live in front of a webcam or device cameras. Contacts made initially in public digital space are likely to be carried on privately via email, instant messaging services, mobile phones or text messaging.
- 1.3 There is also growing cause for concern about the exposure of children to inappropriate material via digital technology, for example adult pornography, extreme forms of obscene material and scenes of violence. There is an increasing trend of social media sites being used to groom children and young people into extremist of political stand. Allowing or encouraging a child/young person to view such material may warrant further enquiry. Children/young people themselves may engage in bullying (Cyberbullying), deliberately send explicit images of them (sexting) or use device cameras to capture violent assaults of other children/young people for circulation.
- 1.4 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) incidents being facilitated in the digital world is on the increase.
- 1.5 Where there is evidence of a child using digital devices (including gaming devices) excessively, this may be a cause for concern more generally, in the sense that it may inhibit the development of real-world social relationships, become a factor contributing to health issues or negatively impact on their educational attainment. It may also indicate wither a contemporary problem, or a deeper underlying issue that ought to be addressed, such as addictive behaviour and behaviour relating to the obsessive use of technologies, such as game stations.
- 1.6 There is some evidence that people found in possession of indecent photographs/pseudo photographs of children/young people are likely to be involved directly in child abuse. Thus when somebody is discovered to have placed or

accessed such material on the internet the Police should normally consider the likelihood that the individual is involved in the active abuse of children/young people. In particular, the individual's access to children should be established, within the family, employment contexts, and in other settings (e.g. work with children as a volunteer or in other positions of trust).

- 1.7 If there are particular concerns about one or more specific children, the normal safeguarding referral process should be followed. As part of their role in preventing abuse and neglect, LSCBs should consider activities to raise awareness about the safe use of the internet.
- 1.8 South Tyneside is a key partner in the development and delivery of training and education programmes, with the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP). This includes building on the work of the Home Office and the ICT industry in raising awareness about the safe use of interactive communication technologies (ICT) by children.

2. RECOMMENDED GOOD WORKING PRACTICES

2.1 Organisations should:

- Ensure that they have an appropriately trained person nominated as the Lead E-Safety Champion who receives regular training, including updates on emerging trends/technologies and potential risks and cascades the relevant information to other members of the organisation
- Ensure that any changes to the designated champion are communicated to others in the organisation
- Ensure that they have an e-safety policy appropriate to the needs of the organisation. In addition there should be an acceptable use policy for all users of the technology and a social networking policy, which covers all members of the organisation
- For those individual organisations such as schools, third sector etc, they should have their own e-safety policy appropriate to their user group
- Provide guidance on using Social Networking Sites and other communications/technologies safely and responsibly to children, young people and staff
- Encourage children and young people to be critically aware of the materials they read and show them how to validate information before accepting its accuracy
- Ensure that carers and parents of children and young people accessing communication technology are aware of e-safety issues
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- Ensure that they use digital images and videos of children and young people responsibly and safely and encourage children, young people, their parents and carers to do the same
- Encourage the safe and responsible use of mobile phones and other portable devices by children and young people
- Provide guidance for children and young people on the laws governing copyright and intellectual property

- Ensure that they keep a log of all incidents of an e-safety nature, including any required actions
- Ensure appropriate e-safety training is delivered to members of the organisation

3. AUTHORISING ACCESS

- 3.1 All organisations must have appropriate Acceptable Use Policies in place which users must read (and sign where applicable) before using any digital networking systems or network resources. This is in addition to the e-safety policy that each organisation must have and regularly review.
- 3.2 all organisations must have a social networking policy which is read, understood and signed by all members of the organisation.
- 3.3 The organisation should keep an up to date record of all users (including staff and pupils) who are granted Internet and network access.
- 3.4 Those with Parental Responsibility will be asked to sign and return a consent form which allows their children and young people access to the system. In addition they will be asked to sign an agreement to support the organisation in promoting the safe use of technologies.

4. ASSESSING RISKS

- 4.1 The organisation will take all reasonable precautions to ensure that users access only appropriate material. Any inappropriate access, whether intentional or unintentional, will be dealt with in line with the organisation's e-safety policy and procedures.
- 4.2 The organisation will regularly audit e-safety provision to establish if their policies and procedures are adequate, up to date and implemented effectively.

5. HANDLING E-SAFETY COMPLAINTS

- 5.1 Any complaint about staff misuse of internet, digital systems or digital devices must be referred to the appropriate person in the organisation (this person will be identified within the organisations e-safety policy).
- 5.2 Complaints of a Child Protection nature must be dealt with in accordance with the organisation's Child Protection Procedures.

6. COMMUNICATION OF THE POLICIES

- 6.1 Acceptable Use Rules should be displayed in appropriate rooms and discussed regularly with children and young people and at least annually.
- 6.2 Children and young people should be informed that network and Internet use can be monitored.
- 6.3 The importance of e-safety will be discussed with children and young people including the standards expected both inside and outside of the school environment.

- 6.4 The organisation's e-safety policy will be discussed with staff and its importance explained, including the requirement to maintain appropriate professional standards both inside and outside of the work environment (e.g. social networking sites and the required professional boundaries with users).
- 6.5 Staff should be made aware that internet traffic and all other use on the organisation's equipment may be monitored and traced to the individual user. Discretion and professional conduct is essential.
- 6.6 Those with parental responsibility will be made aware of the organisation's e-safety policy and will be encouraged to actively promote the safe use of technologies at home.