



Policy No: SJD/YP/28	Authorised by: Davina Powell	Review Date: 20th October 2023
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SOCIAL MEDIA & INTERNET USE		

Introduction

This policy is referring to our ability as carers to protect and educate young people in their use of technology in addition to having other mechanisms in place to protect young people.

All staff have a responsibility to behave as positive role models, and therefore their behaviour towards other adults and young people should involve challenging inappropriate comments, views and images wherever these may be made - by other people, in newspapers and other media such as television and popular music.

Information technology is just another means of communicating and disseminating ideas and images in a way that is less obvious to other people. For example, a young person sat in the lounge reading a pornographic magazine can be easily seen and challenged. A young person sat in the lounge viewing internet pornography on a mobile 'phone may not even be seen to be doing so by another person in the same room.

Risk Assessment

It is important that all staff are aware of the risks to a young person's safety and wellbeing when they use social networking in particular and the internet in general. This needs to be understood by all keyworkers and their colleagues as a safeguarding matter.

While risk assessments will be drawn up and maintained in respect of each individual resident of a home, a separate risk assessment should be maintained in each home in order to manage general risks associated with IT.

Education is the key to enabling young people to stay safe when online. There are measures we may take as carers to ensure e-Safety for residents, and these include:

- Use of Windows parental security to block unsuitable websites and set time limits for residents when using a computer provided at the home.
- Zebra IT protection software
- Weekly check (recorded by staff in the home's diary) of search history.
- If the search history has been deleted this is a matter for concern

Staff need to ensure that 6 areas are addressed with young people in key work sessions and use Appendix 2 of the E-safety questionnaire for key work sessions to engage with each resident regarding safety online.

1. **Online Behaviour** - understanding what constitutes cyberbullying and sexting, and understanding how to maintain positive behaviours online as we would expect in the real world.

Cyberbullying- this is bullying online.

What makes this a specific form of bullying are:

- Larger number of bullies involved; social networking may mean that tens or hundreds of young people join in the bullying.
- Relentlessness: bullying may take place continually with bullies posting comments on an ongoing basis, including bullying when the victim is in a 'safe' environment such as their home.
- This form of bullying will be far more difficult for carers to observe.

Sexting - this is the sharing or exchanging of sexually explicit text and / or images.

What makes this a specific form of sexualised behaviour are:

- Permanence of the images or text on the world wide web (and therefore may be seen by others in the distant future without the involvement or consent of those initially involved).
- Random receipt of the text or images by others (not controlled by the senders).
- Behaviours - young people may behave in a different way towards others when their communication is via electronic means, especially if they cannot see or be seen by the person with whom they are communicating. They are likely to be less inhibited when using social media than when face to face.

2. **Online Reputation** - we all have reputations, among members of our family, friends, school, or work colleagues, based upon other people's interpretation of our behaviour. In the same way, individuals will develop an online reputation based upon interpretation of someone's behaviour on social media. In addition, a dispute between two or more young people may lead to text or images that had been kept private between them being shared with others in a malicious way (e.g., 'nude selfies' of one young person being sent to members of their family or whole school by another). In this way a young person who does not take care of their online reputation may become a victim of cyberbullying.

3. **Using Social networking Safely** - many young people will describe having what appears to be huge number of 'friends' online. It is likely that they have never actually met many of these. Members of staff need to be aware that their image of what a 'friend' is, may be different from a young person's understanding.

Young people need to be aware that when discussing or sharing intimate or private information with a 'friend' online, they then lose control of that information in a different way from merely saying the words to their friends.

In other words, a private conversation face to face may be denied later, but an image or text message cannot. An image may be forwarded to a third party. A text message or received online message may be forwarded as proof of the discussion.

N.B. Think how we use emails rather than telephone calls so that we have proof for later use.

Key workers and colleagues should make young people aware of grooming.

Grooming - this refers to an individual adult or young person preparing another, more vulnerable person to be their sexual victim.

It involves the lowering of the victim's usual state of awareness and control in order that the perpetrator may lure the victim into activity that they would otherwise not engage in. This may involve using social media to engage with a young person, with the perpetrator pretending to be another young person and encouraging the victim to disclose information about themselves and / or send explicit pictures. These may then be used by the perpetrator to blackmail the victim in order to gain their agreement to engage in sexual activity. Blackmail of this type has led to suicide by victims, who may be of either sex or perpetrators who may be of either sex.

Young people may also be vulnerable to adults or other young people wishing to recruit to cults, or to persuade young people to join fighting overseas. All staff should be aware of any changes in young people's behaviours and expressed attitudes and should share such information with professional colleagues.

It is extremely important that key workers and colleagues strive to develop positive relationships with young people in order to help them to understand this danger.

This behaviour by its nature is secretive. All staff should be aware that paedophiles and other who may wish to harm children are highly motivated.

4. Understanding the Reliability and Validity of Online Information

Young people often use online information, for example, to research for school or college work. In this way, technology has to a large extent taken over from newspapers and books.

Young people need to be supported by key workers and their colleagues to learn to critically evaluate the information they receive, by:

- Encouraging discussion of news items on television
- Provision of newspapers magazines of different political viewpoints and discussion of particular items to highlight political slant or 'spin'.

In the same way, young people should be advised to check information they gain online, and not to assume that it is correct because it is online.

5. Data Security- ensure that young people are aware of hacking and viruses and the need to keep passwords secure and private to avoid malicious or criminal misuse. Young

people considering online banking need to be made aware of the potential dangers of this, including the potential for cyberbullying and grooming.

Young people should be advised not to accept requests from strangers to be their online friend, and not to share their mobile phone number with strangers.

6. What to do if Something goes Wrong

It is important to recognise that young people are continuing in a process of exploring the world in which they find themselves. They are experimenting, and sometimes experiments go wrong.

Key workers and colleagues should expect that young people will make mistakes, and they will need to encourage young people to feel able to expect acceptance and support from their carers, if for example, they are being bullied but have shared their contact information against previous advice, or if they have inadvertently uploaded sensitive information or images.

APPENDIX 1 - Information Technology Risk Assessment

Name of Home: SJD Homes

Name of person carrying out assessment: Date:

Date for review of assessment:

APPENDIX 2 - E-Safety Questionnaire for Key work Sessions

1. What is E-Safety?

Ask the young person their understanding of this - it may be different from what you might expect. This will enable you to have a baseline understanding of the resident's awareness of potential dangers and therefore support you in helping the young person to stay safe online.

2. Discussion: Safe use of Social Networking

Use a scenario to check the young person's ability to critically analyse a situation and see dangers / consider safe behaviours. *Examples:*

A. Dawn, 12-year-old girl, has met Aaron, 15 years, online. Aaron has asked her to meet him.

DANGER - Aaron may not be who he says he is. Ask the resident what Dawn should do.

'Aaron' is aged 45; he is a convicted sex offender.

SUGGEST - speak to a parent/ carer / social worker. Contact police.

B. Aaron has asked Dawn for a 'nude selfie'. She has agreed. He has now told her that unless she meets him for sex, he will send her picture to her parents / school.

DANGER - 'Aaron' has already committed an offence. He is now attempting blackmail.

SUGGEST - speak to parent/ carer/ social worker. Contact police, CEOP. Remind the young person that THE ADULT is in trouble, NOT THEM.

C. Dawn has opened an online bank account and is about to have her leaving care grant transferred into it. She has not bothered with internet security (she does not have Norton (or equivalent) on her laptop, and she has shared her password with a friend online.

DANGER - someone could easily misuse her password and transfer her money out of her account.

SUGGEST- always have security, NEVER share passwords.

3. *Are you a Cyberbully?*

What you thought was just a joke might really hurt the person involved. If you are sending a message that could be hurtful to someone, they might be having a similar hurtful message sent by 1000 others too.

4. *What is your Digital Footprint?*

Discuss the idea of reputation (among family members, friends, at school, at work. What image do we want others to have of us?

Things (pictures, messages) we post online may stay on the web forever. Pictures on your phone may be hacked by someone and shared with people you would rather not have them shared with.

Are there nude pictures of you online or on your phone? If so, think; would you think of posing like that in the centre of town?

Are there threats made by you online? If so, you could be providing evidence that could be used against you in court.

5. *Do you believe everything you see Online?*

Discuss different points of view and how different people and organisations will try to put their point of view forward or even attempt to deceive others. *Example*

A. Different political parties will have publications and websites offering different views of society.

B. Newspapers express different views on similar stories, e.g., Daily Mirror supports Labour, the Sun supports Conservatives.

Do you believe everyone online is who they say they are?

6. *Have you got lots of Friends?*

Discuss with the young person how many friends they have; many young people will describe as 'friends' people who they have never actually met. The concept of 'friends' has changed, largely due to increased travel and, more recently, due to the availability of social networking.

What is a friend?

What do we expect of them and what do they expect from us?

If the young person were ill and had to go to hospital, how many/ which friends do they think would visit them?

Source: *(Inspection Handbook: Children's Homes (Ofsted, March 2015)*