Home-Start Herefordshire Online Safety Guidance

Social media and other online interactions are a great way to stay connected with families, friends, colleagues and teachers. It can also be a great learning resource for adults and children as well as helping us on a practical level with shopping.

However we should always be mindful of our responsibility toward children and vulnerable adults, therefore if you are concerned that a child or parent could be at risk of harm online, follow policy and procedure and ensure you record your concerns factually and accurately.

Why is online safety important?

Staff and volunteers can play an essential role in helping parents and young children learn the foundations of safe online behaviour. Technology is part of everyday life for parents and children and we all need to consider the risks and implications of online behaviour, particularly in relation to social media (Facebook, twitter, etc.). Children are naturally curious in understanding the world we live in and we need to encourage them to use and explore technology safely.

Role modelling safe use of the internet should become part of our everyday practice.

What online risks should we be aware of that might children face?

Content (what they may see):

- Exposure to inappropriate videos, pictures, or messages which might upset, worry or frighten them frighten them
- Sexually explicit videos, etc.
- Violent behaviour that is normalized either through repetition or context
- Hateful speech/incitement to hatred
- Incitement to self-harm/suicide

Context (how might risks be realised):

- Imitating harmful or inappropriate behaviour they see online
- Searching for inappropriate content on purpose or stumbling upon it by accident. This includes using voice activated tools to search for content (e.g. Alexa)
- Inadvertently giving apps or websites permission to share their location or other personal information
- personal information (especially via games/social media}
- Spending real money via in-app or in-game purchases
- Sharing photos/videos of themselves and clues to their identity/address

Contact (who might communicate with them):

- Interacting with people they don't know, such as when gaming or using video
- Interacting with people they do know such as friends and family members
- Sending images, photographs or personal information to people via social media, chats, email etc

Conduct (how they might behave):

- Exhibiting unhealthy behaviours and boundaries around their use of screens   e.g. covering the screen or closing down the current browser when a trusted adult is present
  - Being unkind to each other online as well as offline; this could be using mean
  - words or by excluding others from their games
  - Encouraging others to self-harm
  - Using words or terminology which are not appropriate for their age
  - Engaging in unhealthy relationships

- As part of natural development, children may exhibit curiosity about their own and others' private body parts; if this occurs via technology children may be at risk of sharing and/or receiving inappropriate or indecent images and videos of themselves which puts them at risk of being on the register of child sex offenders

Strategies to minimise risk

- Being aware about the benefits and risks related to new technology
- Use a monitoring application that is linkable to a parent/guardian's device such as Family Link. This allows the parent/guardian to:
  - Monitor the child's activity
  - Limit access to applications
  - Set time allowances for use of the device
  - Set permission request for apps the child wants to download allowing you time to review the app prior to them having access and block if you think it is not appropriate for the child.
- Supporting parents/carers to find out about online safety and risks to themselves and their children including:
  - When supervision of using internet enabled devices may be useful
  - Checking that Apps, websites and search results are appropriate before using them with children or allowing their children to see them.

For example, CBeebies and CBBC are trusted sources and you can assume the apps they produce are appropriate for the ages specified. But, with an unknown app provider the parent should check reviews, see if it is recommended by anybody they trust, and check if it has in-app purchases. Question the reliability of sources providing information.

YouTube

You can:

- Turn off auto-play
- Use the YouTube kids app where appropriate
- Turn on safe searching
- Enable restricted mode in the settings- general

Applying safety modes and filters - default settings tend not to ensure a high level of privacy or security.

- Role modelling the safe use of mobile phones and cameras
- Regularly checking privacy settings to make sure personal data is not being shared inadvertently or inappropriately.

Encourage parents/carers to abide by age-related settings, i.e. careful consideration given to the age a child might have a Facebook account or play Grand Theft Auto.

Reputation

- Ensure privacy settings are on, up to date and reviewed regularly - Content posted online can be copied, shared or misinterpreted and can potentially be public and permanent. This can influence personal and professional perceptions about you, both positively and negatively.
- Remember that employers often check online profiles as part of the recruitment process so check your online profile - you can even try searching for yourself online or within a social media app to see what may come up!
- It is important to role model positive behaviour and be professional online; posting derogatory comments is never acceptable. Staff and volunteers should uphold their own reputation and that of Home-Start.

Online Resources:

- NSPCC: https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety
- Parent Zone: https://parentzone.org.uk/home
- Childnet: A range of resources for online safety for children aged 3-18: https://www.childnet.com
- Thinkyouknow: https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk
- Netaware: https://www.net-aware.org.uk
- AskAboutGames: https://www.askaboutgames.com/about-us/about-us
- Moderating app- Family link: https://families.google.com/familylink