

PART 26

E-SAFETY PROCEDURE

Introduction

Recognition & Response

Allegations against people who work with children

Managing the risks posed by new technologies

Bullying & other forms of abuse of children online

Further guidance and support information

INTRODUCTION

1. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) enables children and young people to learn, play, communicate and explore the world in fantastic new ways and many children and young people are now skilled in using computers, mobile phones and gaming machines. However with this new technology there are new risks. Everyone who is responsible for the welfare and safety of children needs to understand what these increased risks are and how we can all work together to enjoy these new technologies safely.
2. E-Safety is essentially about creating a safe working environment when using ICT and it is regularly associated with the use of the internet, involving both adults as well as children.
3. *"As in any other area of life, children and young people are vulnerable and may expose themselves to danger - knowingly or unknowingly - when using the internet and other digital technologies. Indeed, some young people may find themselves involved in activities which are inappropriate or possibly illegal."*
4. One of the key risks of using the internet, email or chat services is that young people may be exposed to inappropriate material. This may be material that is pornographic, hateful or violent in nature; that encourages activities that are dangerous or illegal; or that is just age-inappropriate or biased. One of the key benefits of the web is that it is open to all, but unfortunately this also means that for example, those with extreme political, racist or sexual views are able to spread their distorted version of the world.
5. In the case of pornography and child abuse images, there is no doubt that the internet plays host to a large amount of legal and illegal material. Curiosity about pornography is a normal part of sexual development but young people may be shocked by some of the material online and it is not known what the long-term effects of exposure to such images may be. Additionally, seeking out some aspects of pornography may be illegal and could result in a criminal conviction.
6. The threat of physical danger is perhaps the most worrying and extreme risk associated with the use of the internet and other technologies, and is probably the risk most reported by the media. A criminal minority make use of the internet and related services such as chat rooms to make contact with young people. The intention of these individuals is to establish and develop relationships with young people with the sole purpose of persuading them into relationships which they can progress to sexual activity. Paedophiles will often target specific individuals, posing as a young person with similar interests and hobbies in order to establish an online 'friendship.' (Safeguarding Children in a Digital World. Becta 2006).

7. In 2007 the Government commissioned Dr Tanya Byron to conduct an independent review to consider the risks to children from exposure to potentially harmful or inappropriate material via the internet and computer games. This report entitled, '*Safer Children in a Digital World*' was subsequently published in March 2008 and detailed recommendations to improve the safety of children through offering clear guidance and standards for all agencies who work with children and young people. To read the full report or summary, or to obtain further information for children and young people on the findings of the report, please use the following hyperlink: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/byronreview>
8. In June 2008, in response to the recommendations from the 'Byron Report,' the Government published an action plan detailing how the recommendations from the report will be implemented. For further details on the 'Byron Review Action Plan' and how it affects your agency or organisation please follow this hyperlink: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/byronreview/actionplan/>

RECOGNITION AND RESPONSE

9. Professionals in all agencies working with children, adults and families should be alert to the possibility that:
 - A child may already have been / is being, abused and the images distributed on the internet or by mobile telephone;
 - An adult or older child may be grooming a child for sexual abuse, including for involvement in making abusive images. This process can involve the child being shown abusive images;
 - An adult or older child may be viewing and downloading child sexual abuse images.

Concern about children or adults

10. A professional who has a concern should discuss this with their line manager and / or their agency's nominated safeguarding children adviser. A concern should be shared even where there is no evidence to support it.
11. Where the concerns involve a particular child or children, a referral should be made to Children's Social Care as set out in section 3 of Staffordshire's Inter-agency Safeguarding Child Board Procedures; '*Making Referrals*': (<http://www.staffsscb.org.uk/procedures/>). Where specific children are identified as abused in the production of images a Section 47 Enquiry should be carried out as set out in section 4 '*Undertaking Assessments and Investigations*' (<http://www.staffsscb.org.uk/procedures/>).

12. Professionals should be aware that the child may not want to acknowledge his/her involvement or admit its abusive nature, and may resist efforts to be offered protection. This should not be a deterrent and agencies will in such cases need to work together closely in order to continue to monitor and assess the nature and degree of any risk to the child.
13. The Police should ensure that checks are made with regard to the subject adult and any other suspected adults, their contact with other children and other activities involving children. This is in order to identify existence of organised abuse or abuse of children through sexual exploitation. If these are identified then the procedures relating to '*Complex Abuse Investigations*' & '*Children involved in Prostitution*' (section 7 & 21; <http://www.staffsscb.org.uk/procedures/>) should be followed.
14. The Police can draw upon powers to seize communication materials in specified circumstances where the level of evidence would support an application to do so.
15. Where there is concern about an adult, but there is no identifiable child a referral should be made to the Police, who must consider the possibility that the individual might also be involved in the active abuse of children. Their access to children should be established, including family and work settings, and a referral made to Staffordshire Children's Social Care Services: **First Response Team on 0800 1313 126.**

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST PEOPLE WHO WORK WITH CHILDREN

16. Professionals in all agencies should be aware of any indications amongst their colleagues of accessing abusive images. They should follow section 7 of the SSCB procedures for '*Managing Allegations of Abuse made against a person who works with Children*' (<http://www.staffsscb.org.uk/procedures/>).
17. It is important that individuals suspected of accessing, creating or downloading indecent images of children are not alerted prior to the police undertaking their investigations as they may destroy computer evidence at work or home. This has implications for managing allegations against people who work with children and means individuals may not be fully informed of reasons for their suspension.
18. Research into investigations of adults accessing child abuse images has identified that professional staff accessing such images may have access to children both in their occupation and in their personal lives. In such cases, the section 47 strategy discussion (Children Act 1989) will consider the need to assess risk both in relation to the occupation and in relation to

the risk to any child within the family of the individual concerned (see paragraph 31 below).

19. Consideration will also need to be given to safeguarding action required in relation to any other child related activities in which the individual may be involved.
20. Human resources and IT professionals should be aware of the new legal framework created by the *Sexual Offences Act 2003* for managing potentially illegal child abuse images. (For further information on this act go to; <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2003/>).

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)

21. The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP, www.ceop.gov.uk) brings together law enforcement officers, specialists from children's charities and industry to tackle online child sexual abuse. CEOP provides a dedicated 24 hour online facility for reporting instances of online child sexual abuse.

MANAGING THE RISK POSED BY NEW TECHNOLOGIES

22. As with many new or emerging technologies, the internet has brought unfamiliar challenges, some of which create actual or potential dangers for children and young people.
23. Whilst offering revolutionary advances in communication, the main risks are in relation to sexual exploitation and the use of technology to bully and record physical abuse. In addition to the dangers of sexual exploitation, new technologies can also provide a medium for physical abuse and bullying.
24. New technologies have offered children and young people revolutionary advances in communication with their peers and with the world. However, they also afford an opportunity for misuse and abuse.

Children who view adult pornography

25. Children & young people often access adult pornography. However, the persistent viewing of material which is degrading, violent or sadistic or beyond the realms of normal curiosity can affect how young people can think about intimacy, themselves and their values and attitudes towards relationships and sexual development. It may be a way of demonstrating 'preferred' or 'fantasised' sexual activity. Adult pornography can also be used by adults or young people as part of a grooming process.

Children sold online for sexual abuse offline

26. Children can be sold online via bulletin boards and chat rooms on the Internet. If illegal advertising of children for sex is discovered, the police should make a concerted effort to ensure that not only are the sites shut down but also to identify both victim and perpetrator. Covert police activity may well be required in order to infiltrate such sites. Police should consider seeking advice from the Child Exploitation & Online Protection Centre (CEOP) – www.ceop.gov.uk. Further advice can be sought from the Internet Watch Foundation – www.iwf.org.uk.

Children abused through prostitution using Internet and mobile phones

27. New technologies such as chat rooms, MSN and SMS are often used by those wanting to sexually exploit children and young people. These young people are often vulnerable and known to statutory agencies such as Children's Social Care and Health Services, and supported by voluntary organisations. They may be coping with other issues such as drugs, alcohol dependency or homelessness. For more information please view the SSCB Policy and Procedure '*Children involved in Prostitution*' (Section 21).

Adult or young people who engage with 'cybersex' online

28. Children can be coerced to take part in sexual activity online by abusers who employ specific conversational techniques. The grooming process is no different from that used by abusers offline. However, the whole abusive episode takes place online without physical contact between the child and perpetrator. The most common place for targeting these children is in 'teen chat rooms'. When discovered, children will often deny any such activities, due to both the grooming process and the shame that many children feel when discovered doing something that have been told not to reveal and about which they feel deep humiliation and fear.
29. The interviewing process must be sensitively handled, to give the young person permission to describe what has happened. The interviewers should be very clear with the young person that responsibility lies with the abuser and reaffirm for the child that the abuse is not their fault. If a section 47 enquiry is undertaken, (go to SSCB procedures, section 4; www.staffsscb.org.uk), careful consideration should be given as to how the child will be interviewed to avoid any reinforcement of the abuse i.e. video interviewing.

Young people creating or placing images of other young people online

30. The use of the internet as a tool for bullying is becoming increasingly common where the intention is to humiliate compromise or exploit the young person who is the subject of the image.

Children of adults, who create, view or download abusive images of children

31. Police and Children's Social Care must consider not only the offences committed by the adult but also the protection needs of children within the household. Such an assessment would need to include:

- Information from the offender statement
- Interviews with the offenders partner
- Information-sharing with agencies involved in the children's lives such as nurseries, schools and health professionals
- If deemed necessary, interviews with the children of the household appropriate to their age and understanding

Children, who create, view or download sexually abusive images of children

32. Although some children plan to and purposefully download these images, others have been forced to do so by peer group pressure or introduced to these sites by predatory adults as part of grooming for sexual abuse.

Children groomed online for sexual abuse offline

33. It is an offence to groom a child and a breach of this legislation requires only:

- meeting or communication with the child or young person on at least two occasions
- meeting or travelling with the intention to meet
- Concerns for children and young people who may be vulnerable to abuse (direct or indirect) should be assessed in response to child ***in need*** or at ***risk of significant harm***.

34. Research shows that in the UK, over eight million children have access to the internet and a high proportion of these children (1 in 12), have met someone offline whom they first met online.

Children sold online for live sexual abuse

35. This is usually a highly calculated and planned sexually abusive activity as it requires the perpetrator to alert online peers of his/her intention to abuse on a set date and time. Payment for this activity may involve money or take the form of bartering for other indecent images or drugs. If a section 47 enquiry is undertaken, careful consideration should be given as to how the child will be interviewed to avoid any reinforcement of the abuse i.e. video interviewing.

Children made the subject of child abuse images or pseudo-images

36. Children the subject of child abuse images may suffer incalculable trauma which may affect them for the rest of their lives. Perpetrators often use strategies to inhibit children disclosing the abuse: children may be shown abusive images of other children or their own abusive images in an attempt to normalise the activity; encourage children to place images of themselves or friends online; encouraged to be proactive in either their own sexual abuse or that of other children.

37. Pseudo images may be created of particular children by the technological manipulation of existing photographs, art or cartoons. These images often have the same impact on the victim as non-pseudo images.

BULLYING AND OTHER FORMS OF ABUSE OF CHILDREN ONLINE

38. Children can be subject to non-sexual forms of abuse such as 'happy slapping' and recorded physical assaults. Young people may also become involved, either willingly or unwillingly, in sites that encourage self-harm, humiliation, hatred or suicide.

39. All of the above forms of abuse can be accessed via internet and mobile platforms such as phones, 3-G, and memory mass storage devices.

Cyber-bullying

40. Bullying may be defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. It can take many forms but the main types are:

- physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft)
- verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, threats, name-calling)
- emotional (e.g. isolating an individual from the activities and social acceptance of their peer group)

“The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children, to the extent that it affects their health and development or, causes them significant harm (including self-harm). All settings in which children are provided with services or are living away from home should have in place rigorously enforced anti-bullying strategies.” (Paragraph 11.39, Working Together 2006).

41. New technologies have offered children and young people innovative advances in communication with their peers and with the world. However, they also afford an opportunity for misuse and abuse. Bullying through technology (**cyber-bullying**) can be devastating for the victim and, unlike in the real world, the victim can be targeted at any time day or night, home or school.
42. Bullying can include emotional and/or physical harm to such a degree that it constitutes significant harm. See section 1, page 5 for more information on ‘*Understanding Significant Harm*’; go to:
www.staffsscb.org.uk/professionals/procedures/
43. Professionals in all agencies should be alert to bullying and competent to support and manage both the victim and the abuser.
44. Staff should be supported by locally agreed thresholds and single agency policies to combat bullying. Please go to the following websites to view Staffordshire’s Anti-Bullying Charter;

<http://education.staffordshire.gov.uk/PupilSupport/Anti-Bullying/>

<http://education.staffordshire.gov.uk/PupilSupport/Anti-Bullying/Pledge/>
45. In the more serious cases these should include discussion with the agencies nominated ‘safeguarding advisor’ and making a referral to Children’s Social Care Services. **Separate referrals for assessment and support should be made in respect of both child victim and child abuser.**
46. Where the bullying may involve an allegation of crime (assault, theft, harassment) a referral should be made to the police at the earliest opportunity.
47. Information about good practice in anti-bullying strategies (real & virtual) for schools, can be accessed at; www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/tacklingbullying

FURTHER GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

For professionals

- Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board; <http://www.staffsscb.org.uk/>
- On this inter-agency web-site there is specific web-site information and an 'e-safety toolkit' designed to offer support and guidance. Go to; <http://www.staffsscb.org.uk/professionals/esafety/e-SafetyToolkit> for more information about e-safety in Staffordshire, including guidance on Acceptable Use Policies (AUP's) for schools and local authority services.
- BECTA (www.becta.org.uk) is the Government agency leading the national drive to improve learning through technology. As part of this remit, they are the key agency in supporting Local Safeguarding Children Boards to understand and respond to the issues and risks related to the use of ICT by children.
- The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP, www.ceop.police.uk) brings together law enforcement officers, specialists from children's charities and industry to tackle online child sexual abuse. CEOP provides a dedicated 24 hour online facility for reporting instances of online child sexual abuse.
- www.thinkuknow.co.uk – a website for professionals (and children, young people and parents) full of information and resources about staying safe online.
- www.childnet.com – This is an organisation, which works with partners around the world to try and ensure that children and young people are protected from the dangers of the Internet.
- Barnardo's "Just One Click" Report – www.barnardos.org.uk
- The Virtual Global Taskforce (VGT) www.virtualglobaltaskforce.com was created in 2003 as a direct response to lessons learned from investigations into online child abuse around the world. It is an international alliance of law enforcement agencies working together to make the Internet a safer place.
- www.iwf.org.uk This is an organisation, which works with the Police and Internet Service Providers to trace those responsible for putting harmful or illegal material on the web. It also encourages web surfers who find harmful or illegal material to report it.

- The Black Country and Birmingham “Stop it Now!” Campaign (www.stopitnow.org.uk).
- For information on the Byron report: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/byronreview/>
- For more information on tackling bullying
www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/safeguardingandsocialcare/safeguardingchildren/stayingSAFE/bullying/tacklingbullying/ and
www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/tacklingbullying

For children and young people

The following information gives advice to parents and children in terms of considering the dangers and managing risks, as well as information about computer software and supervised chat rooms etc.

- www.thinkuknow.co.uk – a website for children, young people, parents and professionals full of information about staying safe online.
- Information for children / young people on the Byron Review:
www.dcsf.gov.uk/byronreview
- There are links to many e-safety resources on our webpage at www.staffsscb.org.uk/