

1. Scope

This policy & guidance is aimed at PCC Foster Care Agency foster carers and the children and young people they care for.

2. Purpose

This policy & guidance offers guidance and support to foster carers in their care of fostered children and young people.

3. Introduction

Children and young people should be encouraged to enjoy and utilise computers as most jobs now require competence with Information Technology. However, careful monitoring is necessary to guard against inappropriate usage.

Every Local Authority placing a child will expect that the fostered child will have access to a computer. PCC Foster Care Agency is committed to fulfilling its duties and responsibilities in regard to the safety and wellbeing of cared for children:

- Foster Service Regulations 2011
- Foster Services: National Minimum Standards 2011 (Standard 4 & 7)

PCC Foster Care Agency expects that every foster carer will monitor how their fostered child uses a home computer, both in the amount of time spent and how the computer is being used.

4. What are the potential risks?

Potential risks are:

- Exposure to material that is inappropriate for the child or young person's age.
- Exposure to inaccurate or misleading information.
- Exposure to socially unacceptable or illegal material.
- Exposure to online gambling services.
- Exposure to inappropriate commercial advertising.
- Exposure to inappropriate contact such as grooming via chat rooms, instant messaging, social networking.
- A child or young person may reveal personal information that can lead to someone tracing where they live, go to school, etc. 1 of 3
- Social networking sites can lead to bullying.
- Potential for piracy / illegal downloading.

5. Safety Tips

6. Children under 10.

- If the cared for child is under 10, always sit with them whilst they are online.
- Set clear rules for internet use, whatever the age of the child. This should include sites that are off limits, times when the internet can be accessed, what information should not be shared and guidelines for communication with others (including restricting personal information on social networking sites).
- Encourage your children to talk openly about how they use the internet.
- Insist that your child or young person does not share personal information such as their real name, address, phone number or passwords with people they meet online.
- Help your teenager to create online nicknames that give away no personal information.
- Encourage your teenager to tell you if something or someone online makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened and to simply log off to get away from unpleasant or uncomfortable conversations.
- Know which chat rooms or message boards your teenager visits and whom they talk to.
- Encourage them to use monitored chat rooms and insist they stay in public chat room areas.
- Insist that they never agree to meet an online friend.

7. Further Guidance

You can access tools to protect your child or young person from the potential risks by:

- Using internet filtering software
- Using child friendly search engines and portals
- Enabling content filters on regular search engines

If you are concerned that a child or young person in your family is being stalked, harassed or bullied, you must contact the police. Below are some useful websites that will assist this. You can also talk to the school if there is concern about bullying. Ensure that you share any such concerns with your supervising social worker.

Advise your child or young person about the risks of spyware and viruses and the damage that they can do.

Make children and young people aware of the risks of misleading marketing campaigns

that can encourage them to asking for details etc.

Make sure children and young people understand the risk of fraud should they, for example, download music without paying.

Use internet sites that are specifically designed for children and young people and that include the appropriate level of filtering.

8. Foster Carers and Data Security

Referrals which are sent to you and reports that you send to us relate to children in the care of local authorities and they have ownership of any data relating to these children. All such data in your care must either be deleted when no longer needed or stored in a secure way. For the latter, an encrypted stick or drive is recommended. Laptops and PCs used to store information should be locked, password protected and if possible encrypted.

9. Useful Sites

There are a number of useful sites that provide more information, including help to select software tools to improve internet safety.

www.kidscape.org.uk

www.childline.org.uk

www.bullying.co.uk

www.getnetwise.org

www.getsafeonline.org

www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs21-children

www.ncb.org.uk

www.thinkuknow.net

www.wiredsafety.org

www.parentscentre.gov.uk

www.chatdanger.com

10. IT Support

If there are any queries or concerns then assistance is available through your allocated worker and PCC Foster Care Agency's IT support officer.