E-safety

Children start using computers from a very early age and are increasingly using the internet more and more whether it is at home, in school, on their smartphones or on a games console such as Xbox.

The misuse of these types of technology poses potential dangers and it is important that we are aware of the dangers, minimise the risks and provide information to safeguard the community, particularly children, young people and vulnerable adults.

The risks include:

- **Cyberbullying** - bullying or being bullied using any of the above technologies.
- **Sexting -** stalking and sexual harassment
- **Inappropriate content** - being sent or being invited to view unwelcome content. For example, sexual/pornographic/violent/hateful/racist/homophobic
- **Scams/fraud** - being targeted with the intent to obtain money illegally
- **Grooming** - unwanted approaches of a sexual nature or with sexual intent
- **Overuse of technology**-including mobile devices and internet

Staff and volunteers who work with children and young people need to have an understanding about using technology securely and appropriately within their role, as well as supporting the children they work with. Staff/volunteers may be victims of cyberbullying themselves.

Internet safety and knowing how to protect children, young people and staff/volunteers is essential. Popular social media tools can include websites such as blogs, Wikis, social networking and video sharing sites. Sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr have become everyday forms of communication for both adults and children.

Staff should keep a dialogue open between themselves and children about e-safety, this includes posters and other written information as well as conversations.

Social networking sites

Facebook and all social networking sites or accounts should not be used, accessed or set up to follow a child or young person's movements. Do not monitor or investigate a child/young person's social networking site. If you come across a child/young person's social networking account or site do not enter it. You and your employer are liable to investigation if you act outside these guidelines. If you have safeguarding/child protection concerns follow the approved, multi-agency child protection procedures.

Staff responsibilities

It is good practice for staff to evaluate websites being accessed. Staff should be aware that websites, search results etc. may be safe and appropriate one day but unsafe a day later. All staff members should be aware that filtering software is not always effective and cannot be relied on alone to safeguard children.

All members of staff must be aware that, due to the ease of publishing information and content online, it is now very easy for staff to confuse writing in their capacity as a member of staff with sharing their own individual opinion. Staff must be aware that even as an individual, his/her actions could be criticised and seen as bringing the organisation into disrepute, especially if other users are aware of their role. This may have disciplinary, civil or even criminal consequences. It is crucial that all members of staff are aware of the boundaries and professional practices online in order to protect their professional status. Staff should always remember that once content is shared online it is possible for it be circulated far wider than intended without consent or knowledge.