



Company No. 07986218

E-SAFETY POLICY: summary for parents/carers

June 2015

AIMS

Eagley Junior School is committed to its responsibility towards E-safety thus ensuring the safety of children as far as it is practicable to do so.

Due to the rapid advancement of digital technologies, children embrace and understand advancement in the internet and mobile telephones as the 'norm' and view this 'virtual world' as an extension to their physical world – in this sense children are often referred to as 'digital natives'.

Common technologies include:

- The Internet
- Email
- Instant messaging
- Blogs / Twitter
- Podcasts
- Social networking sites such as Facebook
- Location based social networking such as Google Latitude
- Video broadcasting sites such as YouTube
- Chat rooms, where still used
- Skype
- Online gaming rooms and platforms
- Music download sites
- Mobile phones with camera and video functionality
- Applications

Very often, children's methods of communication and emotions are relayed to others via digital technology whereas for adults, Internet, Digital and Mobile Technology (IDMT) is often viewed simply as a tool, solely to be used for a specific task (e.g. by being accessible to others or to use the internet etc).

Adults may not necessarily understand the apparent necessity for children to constantly be online but should appreciate that excessive usage of IDMT could impair a child's welfare or development by inhibiting real life experiences and social relationships. Parents and carers should, therefore, have some degree of control over the amount of time children have access to IDMT.

Parents and carers may also view this seemingly constant use of IDMT as a barrier to communication rather than an aid and we can therefore no longer consider the wellbeing of children and safeguard them without addressing the potential dangers of the online world.

This policy therefore recognises the potential dangers and risks children can encounter in the online world and provides advice on how to minimise any potential risk to children.

PRINCIPLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

At Eagley Junior School, the Computing subject leader and the Designated Person for Child Protection are responsible for managing any incidents where e-safety has been compromised.

The school records and monitors E-safety incidents and keeps up to date with the emergence of new technologies and trends, including those relating to emailing and mobile phones. Appropriate in-house management and communication strategies are reviewed and amended in the light of these changes.

Education and Learning

The rapid development in IDMT is an essential component in 21st century life for education, leisure, business and social interaction.

Eagley Junior School provides internet access to children in a way that is safe and age appropriate by way of appropriate filtering systems etc. The consent of the parent/carer or foster carer is always sought prior to internet access being granted for children. Children must agree to adhere to the school's E-safety rules and acceptable usage policy.

As IDMT is now part of the statutory school curriculum, Eagley Junior School ensures that children are taught what are acceptable uses of IDMT and are made aware of the potential dangers (including online grooming), the legal implications of their use, and how to effectively research information from the internet and validate its accuracy. Children also use IDMT outside of the school environment and must be encouraged to learn how to evaluate information in order to safeguard themselves from unsuitable and inappropriate websites, particularly if the child is vulnerable (e.g. sites promoting eating disorders, teenage suicide, terrorism and pornography etc).

Eagley Junior School encourages children to use online facilities such as Cyber Mentors who provide instant online support to children being bullied or who are troubled by something either online or offline. www.cybermentors.org.uk . Cyber Mentors are young people who are trained to respond to other children in need of help and support online and serious issues can be escalated to trained online councillors.

The taking and distribution of indecent images of a child under the age of 18 years is a common issue, and is also a criminal offence – this often known as ‘Sexting’ (and includes self-taken indecent images). This will be dealt with as a safeguarding issue. Children must be made aware that perpetrators (including those who forward these images) could be prosecuted under s45 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 for the distribution of child pornography which may result in them being registered on the Sex Offenders Register if convicted. Children should be under no doubt that this criminal record could impact future further education and employment prospects by barring them from working in many occupations.

As the quantity and quality of information available from the Internet can also be even more difficult to determine than that sourced from other channels, children must also be taught that information online may not always be correct and true, and importantly, that the people they encounter on the Internet may not always be who they say they are.

Keeping up to date with Technology

Eagley Junior School’s Computing subject leader will register with websites such as Ofcom - www.ofcom.org.uk and Mashable - www.mashable.com in order to keep up to date with new digital technologies.

Managing ICT Systems

Security is a complex matter and queries should always be referred directly to the Headteacher. Employees and children should be aware that abuse of the school’s policies and procedures could result in a withdrawal of technology provision and potential disciplinary or legal action being instigated against the perpetrator.

All children should follow the school’s internet/e-mail access policy. All employees should follow the Information Management policy and the Protocols for Use of Electronic Media.

Filtering

At Eagley Junior School, levels of internet access and supervision must be age appropriate. Filtering systems are maintained by Bolton MBC.

Older children and professionals may sometimes require temporary access to a normally restricted website in order to carry out research for a project or study. Where this can be justified, restrictions may be temporarily removed. However, access must be monitored.

Access to inappropriate websites and any material perceived to be illegal must be reported to the Headteacher.

Email

Email is now an essential means of communication which can also be accessible via most mobile phones. A degree of responsibility has to sit with children since as soon as email access is permitted. Email is very difficult to control. Restricting both incoming and outgoing email to specific addresses is possible. However, this is not always practical as email addresses and websites can easily be changed.

Email should not automatically be considered private and Eagley Junior School reserves

the right to monitor email. However, there has to be a balance between maintaining the safety of children and their rights to privacy, which are covered by legislation.

Email content and tone are both considered. Due to the impersonal nature of email children may write things or be aggressive or dismissive in tone, which may be hurtful to others. Even if such content or tone is not intended to be hurtful, it may still be considered as cyber-bullying.

The use of common email addresses such as **john.smith@Bolton.gov.uk** should generally be avoided for children / young people as this can identify the young person and their general location and children in schools should use email addresses that don't identify your school e.g. **jsmith6.208@bolton.net**. Young people should be encouraged to be creative and non-identifiable from their personal email addresses (e.g. **groovejet246@yahoo.co.uk** etc.)

General guidance includes the following:

- Children should not reveal personal information about themselves or other young people via email nor ever arrange to meet strangers by email without specific permission from an adult in authority and this should always be under supervision and preferably in a public place.
- The forwarding of chain emails is forbidden.
- Professionals should only communicate with young people by email if this has been agreed in advance with the child, their parent/carer/foster carer and the Headteacher and via equipment owned by the school.
- Professionals should never disclose their personal email addresses to children.
- Children should advise an adult if they receive offensive or threatening email.

Mobile Phone

Many children now have access to mobile telephones which are generally perceived as essential to their day to day living and communicating and now offer access to the internet, instant messaging, email, social networking, a camera and video facilities. Mobile phones are becoming the most commonly used tool for internet access and social networking for children.

Mobile phones therefore pose one of the biggest online threats to children as they allow instant access to all forms of IDMT. Unlike static PC, however, the mobility of the technology means that the online digital world may be accessed by a child virtually anywhere – and as a consequence without the scrutiny or supervision of their parent or carer. This, therefore, makes the child more readily at risk from cyber bullying, being the victim of inappropriate / indecent images being taken and shared with others, being groomed online or by telephone by a stranger or a professional, being the victim of scamming or through being a victim of theft or mugging for the mobile phone by an adult or another young person(s).

Children should only share telephone numbers with those known to them and ensure that electronic records (call, text and email logs) are kept of any bullying or threatening telephone calls, text messages, emails or images received which may need to be used as evidence in any police investigation. Children should be careful about accepting invitations to join location based social networking sites such as GyPSii that allow your location to be identified via GPS enabled phones.

Eagley Junior School does not allow children to use persona mobile phones during school hours. If a child is seen using a mobile phone on the premises, it will be confiscated and stored in the school safe until collected by an adult. There may be occasions where parents feel that a child needs to bring their phone to school. This should be discussed in advance with office staff and the phone must be handed in to the office on arrival at school.

Scrutiny of the content of a pupil's mobile phone by the school is not an automatic right. However, the school reserves the right to do so where there is evidence that inappropriate use has taken place (e.g. cyber-bullying, taking of photos without permission, etc)

Social Networking

The Internet provides ready access to online spaces and social networking sites which allow individuals to publish un-moderated content. Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Chat Rooms, Online Gaming Platforms and Instant Messaging (such as Blackberry messages) can connect individuals to groups of people which may be friends in the 'virtual' world but who may have never met each other in the real world. Users can be invited to join groups and leave comments over which there may be limited or no control.

Children should be encouraged to consider the associated risks and dangers related to sending or accepting friend requests and posting personal comments, inappropriate images or videos about themselves or their peers and the subsequent difficulty in removing an inappropriate image or information once published. They should also be advised not to publish detailed private thoughts or emotions which could be considered threatening, intimidating or hurtful to others.

Children should also be encouraged to never give out any personal details or images which may identify themselves, their peers, their siblings / foster siblings, their location or any groups, schools or organisations they attend or associate with. This includes real names, dates of birth, address, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, photographs or videos, school attended, IM and email addresses, including those of friends, family / foster family and peers.

Children must be advised about e-security and encouraged to set passwords, deny access to unknown individuals and instructed how to block unwanted communications. They should be encouraged to invite known friends only and deny access to others by making their profiles private and only accept friend requests from those already known to them.

Care should be taken to delete old and unused profiles from websites which are no longer used as these will remain accessible to others. Personal information voluntarily shared by a young person is unlikely to remain the same as the person matures and has a greater understanding of how personal information about them can impact on their later lives (i.e. perspective employers making an online search of their name and sighting inappropriate photographs, videos or content etc).

Professionals working or in a position of trust with children (including volunteers) must also familiarise themselves about the risks and inappropriateness of sharing personal information about themselves via social networking sites with young people. They should be made aware of that any inappropriate material posted could affect their professional status. Professionals should restrict access to their friends and family only and 'friend requests' by a young person should be politely declined by explaining professional boundaries. Professionals should also steer clear of social networking sites that young people are known to frequent. (See Protocol for Staff Use of Electronic Media).

Web Cameras

The growing popularity for web cameras now allows children to converse online with each other face to face. This can be more commonly referred to as 'Skyping'. Although the benefits include being able to see the other person you are conversing with, there are also dangers attached to both viewing and being viewed online by another person. These include:

- Being visibly identifiable to the other person. This can also be if anything in the background helps further identifies the child such as a school badge, a certificate with the child's name on it on a wall, a view from a window etc.
- The child does not have an image of the other person they are conversing with. A common excuse provided would be that their webcam is broken. However, this does not allow the child to see the other person they are conversing with and the other person may not be who they say they are.
- Inappropriate or indecent images may be exchanged and recorded and the child blackmailed into performing further sexual acts online which may then be published by the perpetrator.
- The child can be persuaded to participate in risky behaviours online which could put themselves at risk (i.e. encouraged to remove clothing or attempt suicide online).
- The child may witness the other person performing an indecent or upsetting act.
- The child can be 'groomed' online and encouraged to meet up with the other person.
- Children have instant access to websites such as Chat Roulette which offer random webcam chat with strangers.

Parents / carers and foster carers should only permit webcam access in a common family area under supervision

Gaming

Online gaming can be good, competitive fun for children providing users are aware of the following risks:

- It can become incredibly addictive in a very short time. Children can become so immersed in their online communities that they lose touch with the outside world. Certain games demand users to be online during school times and at night, often without their parent's knowledge. Counselling can normally be arranged via a GP for severe addictions.
- Children may participate in games designed for adults which may expose them to levels of language and violence inappropriate to their age – particularly Role Play Games.
- Parents themselves can become gaming addicts and lose any sense of parental responsibility towards their children.
- Gamers can become abusive towards other young gamers, often subjecting the young

person to cyber-bullying if the sites have a chat facility.

- There are some children who engage in risk taking behavior to obtain cheats or knowledge to progress within a game. Adults with a sexual interest in children will encourage them to engage in inappropriate behaviour for rewards, including sexual acts via webcam or sex chat.
- Children need to understand that their online behavior has offline consequences and if another online gamer tries to engage them in a sexual manner, this must be reported to the sites moderator and CEOP immediately. (Child Exploitation Online Protection service www.ceop.police.uk)

Parents / carers and foster carers should only permit gaming access in a common family area under supervision

Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying can be defined as “*The use of Information Communication Technology, particularly mobile phones and the internet to deliberately hurt or upset someone*” (DCSF 2007).

Children should find using IDMT as a positive and creative part of their everyday life. Unfortunately, IDMT can also be used negatively to target a specific young person or group. When children are the target of bullying via comments and threats made on mobiles phones, social network sites and internet websites, they can often feel emotionally bruised, frightened and alone, particularly if adults around them do not understand or are aware of this occurring. A previously safe and enjoyable environment for young people’s activities can become threatening, harmful and a source of anxiety.

Cyber bullying, unlike ‘real world’ bullying, can happen 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and is often perpetrated in the victim’s home which is usually assumed as a safe and private haven away from the reach of bullies. The scale and scope of cyber-bullying may be very much greater than other forms of bullying due to the very nature of electronic messaging.

Unlike ‘real world’ bullying, the cyberbully may remain anonymous and may never be in the same space as the person being bullied

A number of high profile cases showed that cyber-bullying can lead to serious physical harm, either through the victim’s thoughts and actions turning to self-harm or even suicide or in other cases violence can ensue or escalate after cyber-bullying to the extent where a child may be seriously harmed or even murdered in retaliation. These devastating physical consequences of cyber-bully must never be ignored or minimised.

It should also be noted that professionals, including teachers and other education staff are particularly vulnerable to ‘cyber-bullying’ by pupils or even ex-pupils, which may include general insults, threats, harassment, defamation, homophobic or racist remarks or other forms of prejudice based bullying . The effects of cyber bullying by young people on adults are equally distressing and the impact on the victim can be just as profound – Government guidance notes remind us that cyber bullying incidents are upsetting whoever the victim is and whatever age they are. Eagley Junior School is alert to the possibility and potential for cyber bullying towards members of staff by young people and appreciate there is no ‘one size fits all’ or single solution to the problem.

Instances of cyber-bullying are responded to sensitively and in line with the school's anti-bullying policies and procedures. The victim of cyber-bullying is always reassured they have done the right thing in disclosing the bullying and is always supported. Please refer to the attached **Appendix 2** for further information on this.

Publishing young people's images and work

Many organisations create websites inspired by pieces of work and quotations and statements from young people. Often these can include images or videos of young service users which help promote and make the organisation identifiable to other young people.

Still and moving images and sounds can add liveliness and interest to a publication, particularly when young people are included nevertheless the security of children is paramount and names and identifiable locations of young people should never be linked to their images. (i.e. a child placed in a refuge for domestic violence could be traced back to a school by their school uniform).

Although it is fairly simple to upload comments, images and videos on social networking and video broadcasting websites, children must be encouraged to consider the associated consequential risks and dangers in doing this and the difficulties in removing this content, particularly if the content subsequently becomes the property of the publisher. Inappropriate, offensive, pornographic or threatening content can have devastating consequences to individuals and groups and young people should be made aware of the legalities and long term implications of doing this.

At Eagley Junior School, images are published in line with the written consent of their parent or foster carer. (See Images of Pupils protocol)

Illegal Downloading

Whilst there are many sites where music, videos and software can be legally downloaded, children must be made aware that they could be breaking the law by downloading copyright protected files or by infringing other intellectual property rights.

The various industries affected by illegal downloading (particularly music) do monitor the internet and can take legal action ranging from fines to suing those who hold parental responsibility. It is recommended that websites are thoroughly researched prior to downloading content for personal use.

Eagley Junior School has taken measures to ensure that only those downloads which are free, or are covered by the school's various licenses, will be available on school equipment.

E-SAFETY COMPLAINTS

Eagley Junior School has an agreed complaints procedure which also covers complaints about e-safety.

Complaints about employee's IDMT misuse are dealt with by the Headteacher and managed according to the school's disciplinary and / or child protection procedures.

ENGAGING WITH PARENTS/CARERS & FOSTER CARERS

Parents / carers or those with temporary guardianship for a child have responsibility for their children's access to personal and public computers, mobile phones and gaming platforms.

Most children now have access to the internet by way of a home computer / laptop / tablet PC, gaming platform or mobile phone and those with parental responsibility for young people must ensure that this allows for some degree of supervision and that both young people and their parents / carers or foster carers are educated on the risks attached to the internet.

Schools are encouraged to work in partnership with parents / carers & foster carers by way of promoting E-safety on their school's website, newsletters and events such as parent's evenings and raising awareness of the resources available to them including those accessible via the Parents section of the ThinkYouKnow website www.thinkyouknow.co.uk . At Eagley Junior School, parents are sent regular updates regarding e-safety issues. Information is also available on the school facebook page.

Please refer to the attached **Appendix 1** for further information on this.

ADDITIONAL ONLINE ADVICE & SUPPORT

www.boltonsafeguardingchildren.org.uk	Bolton Safeguarding Children's Board
http://www.bullyfreezone.co.uk/	Bully Free Zone – Peer support project, aims to resolve conflict and to reduce bullying
www.ceop.police.uk	Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre for reporting internet abuse
www.thinkyouknow.co.uk	Practical online advice and training resource for children, parents and teachers
www.nen.gov.uk	National Education Network - Online advice and training resource for children, parents and teachers
www.cybermentors.org.uk	Social Networking site for young people which trained young people mentor other young people requiring support
www.clickcleverclicksafe.direct.gov.uk	Internet safety advice from the UK Council for Child Internet Safety
www.facebook.com	Very popular social networking website
www.mashable.com	Provides information on how to keep up with new technology
www.ofcom.org.uk	Provides information on how to keep up with new technology
www.digizen.org/cyberbullying	Department of Education and Childnet advice and guidance on cyber-bullying
http://consumers.ofcom.org.uk/2010/10/parental-controls-help-your-children-manage-their-media	How to help your child manage their internet via parental controls

E-SAFETY ADVICE TO PARENTS / CARERS AND FOSTER CARERS

Those with parental responsibility for children should pay particular attention to the following 'rule of thumb' advice in order to safeguard young people they hold parental (including temporary) responsibility for. Please remember that most children have internet access via their own mobile phones, laptops and tablet computers which can be restricted by using the relevant parental consent controls (foster carers should always verify what restrictions they can impose directly with the young persons allocated social worker) and via certain online gaming platforms such as X Box and PlayStation.

Parents / carers and foster carers of children with additional needs or vulnerabilities must appreciate that their children will require additional support around E-safety particularly if their child is:

- Disabled
- Has special educational needs or learning difficulties
- Is looked after and placed in an area unfamiliar to them
- Is out of mainstream education
- Speaks English as a second language (or does not understand English)
- Known to have gang associations
- Has been the victim of bullying or crime or has lived with domestic violence
- Is gay or unsure about their sexuality
- Has emotional or learning difficulties or does not fully understand the impact of their actions
- Has been the victim of bullying
- Has inconsistent access to education (i.e. is a traveller)

Parents / carers and foster carers should take advantage of the many online resources available via the parents section of the ThinkYouKnow website

www.thinkyounow.co.uk

It is also recommended that they download the Child Exploitation Online Protection tool onto all computer browsers www.ceop.police.uk. This tool provides instant online access for reporting any form of online abuse.

They should also encourage children to download this tool directly onto their Facebook or other social network profile page which will act as a deterrent to potential perpetrators.

RESTRICTING ACCESS TO UNSUITABLE WEBSITES

The following websites are examples of those which pose threats to or may be unsuitable for children and young people and access may have to be restricted or denied by using appropriate filters

- Those which are sexually explicit or contain information of a sexual nature

- Those which permit the purchase of or promote the usage of drugs, alcohol or tobacco
- Personal and dating websites
- Age inappropriate chat rooms and social networking sites
- Certain gaming platforms and websites via X Box, PlayStation, Wii etc
- Websites promoting eating disorders
- Websites promoting suicide
- Websites which teach criminal activities or skills including the purchasing, or enabling, of weapons and which advocate terrorism or extremism
- Those which portray or promote violence or inappropriate language including certain online gaming platforms
- Those which advocate hate speech about religion, race, nationality, gender, age disability or sexual orientation

Chat rooms and social networking sites

Depending on the age of the young person, access to chat rooms and social networking sites may not necessarily be restricted or prohibited (**Facebook has a minimum age of 13**), however those with parental consent should monitor which websites are being accessed and be familiar with the following risks before permitting access:

- People on the internet may not be who they say they are and may be trying to access young people via chatrooms in order to gain their trust and take advantage of them.
- Children and Young people should also be encouraged to never give out any personal details or images which may identify themselves, their peers, their siblings / foster siblings, their location or any groups, schools or organisations they attend or associate with. This includes real names, dates of birth, address, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, photographs or videos, school attended, IM and email addresses, including those of friends, family / foster family and peers. This also includes any 'gangs' they may be affiliated with.
- Children and Young people should not engage in risk taking behaviours on webcams as images can be shared with others, even by those they know – young people should be made aware that once an image is uploaded to the internet they no longer have control over it, irrespective of how quickly they try to remove the image.
- Young people should not meet up with strangers they have met online. Other internet users may not be who they claim to be and may have spent months 'grooming' a young person in order to gain their trust and take advantage of them. If however you suspect that a young person does intend to meet up with someone you should advise them to always take someone else along with them and to meet in a busy public place such as a café or coffee shop

and to stay there and under no circumstances, to go off with the person they have just met on their own..

Parents / carers and foster carers should only ever accept and confirm Facebook friend request from those already known to them.

Parents / carers and foster carers should ideally monitor their child's Facebook accounts and 'friends' lists (**not sure how foster carers could do this without being the young person's friend**)

Whilst for many children / young people may think, facebook, twitter, and other similar social networking sites, are a good way of keeping in touch and sharing information and photographs with other friends and family, this presents specific challenges and risks for foster carers in terms of safeguarding the young people they have temporary guardianship for.

In particular, foster carers should adhere to the following principles:

- Never upload photos of looked after children or their friends on to your Facebook profile.
- Never refer to the names of looked after children, their schools or the locations you go to with them or activities you do with them.
- Ensure your own children, other family members and friends follow the same principles and do not upload pictures of looked after children or refer to activities or locations they have been to with them.
- Never make reference to yourself as a foster carer on your Facebook profile.
- Ensure that your privacy settings are restricted to 'friends only'.
- Encourage your foster child(ren) to tell you about their positive and negative internet experiences. Work with them to help avoid future problems by finding solutions. Know what's 'cool' on the net and keep up with buzzwords, acronyms and latest trends.
- Always seek advice from the child's social worker in the first instance prior to permitting access to Facebook or any other social networking sites.
- Foster carers should adhere to the same contact boundaries, guideline and principles in relation to looked after children have communication with birth parents, siblings and family members. Foster carers should consult with the young person's social worker to seek further advice or guidance.

Gaming Platforms

In order to keep a young person's online gaming profile safe, age appropriate, fun and educational, parents / carers and foster carers should adhere to the following advice:

- **Know the risks of online gaming:**

- **Young people could download offensive content or viruses if they download games from un-reputable websites**
 - **Some free games may require extensive profiles which game owners could then illegally sell on or exploit**
 - **Young people can be bullied and harassed online**
 - **Young people can be groomed online into meeting another player**
 - **Young people can become addicted to gaming, particularly Role Play games**
- Explore online games together with the young person
 - **Research and purchase online games with the young person only from reputable websites sticking to well-known games which are age appropriate and suitable for all the family**
 - **Verify the game is age appropriate for the young person**
 - **Review and agree to the games terms and rules of play**
 - **Install family settings on games and explain to the young person why this is necessary**
- Teach the young person basic rules for safer play
 - Verify how the sites privacy policy will protect information about young people
 - Agree on rules of play and set boundaries and time limits with the young person
 - **Keep the gaming platform in a family room rather than the young person's bedroom. This also prevents young people playing games in the privacy of their bedroom after they have gone to bed**
 - **Only allow young people to play online when under supervision from a responsible adult**
 - Advise young people never to share personal information about themselves, their families, their school or where they live. This includes the sharing of images of themselves.
 - Young people should not meet up with other online gamers unless they are already known to the young person
 - Password protect gaming accounts with complex passwords and create non suggestive family gaming names
 - Agree on fair play and to treat other gamers with respect and to trust instincts. If something doesn't feel right, then this must be raised with a responsible adult.

Please remember that there is a balance to be struck between freedom and protection, supervision and privacy and common sense. Children are looked after for a variety of reasons and very often, their foster families, schools and location have to be kept confidential from their birth families for their own safety and protection.

Foster Carers can refer to further Looked After Children guidance available from the young person's allocated social worker.

The following websites also provide additional useful advice for parents / carers and foster carers

Thinkuknow: www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Click Clever, Click Safe: clickcleverclicksafe.direct.gov.uk

Ofcom: <http://consumers.ofcom.org.uk/2010/10/parental-controls-help-your-children-manage-their-media>

CYBER BULLYING

It is essential that young people, professionals, parents / carers and foster carers understand how cyber bullying differs from other forms of bullying, how this can affect young people and what can be done to combat this form of abuse. Cyber bullying is just as harmful as bullying in the 'real' world and clear procedures should be in place to support the victim as well as respond to and manage the perpetrators actions.

It must be understood that as cyber bullying can happen 24 hours a day 7 days a week 365 days a year and at any time of the day or night, it differs from 'real world' bullying as the victims cannot escape or find respite as it invades places that would ordinarily be safe and private spaces. Organisations must aim for the same 'zero tolerance' approach towards cyber bullying as they would for any other form of bullying.

Those who participate in online bullying often use groups of friends to target their victims. An action as innocent as adding derogatory comments to another person's photograph could rapidly spiral out of control and young people may not realise that their actions constitute bullying however the following are the most commonly reported:

- Email – Can be sent directly to an individual or group of people to encourage them to participate in the bullying and can include derogatory comments or harassment or examples of homophobia, racism, sexism or other forms of prejudice either by message or image. Something originally meant to be a joke can soon escalate out of control.
- Instant Messaging / Chat Rooms – Messages can be sent directly to an individual or group of people who can then be included in the conversation. Again, conversations can easily escalate out of control.
- Social networking sites – Anonymous profiles can be set up on social networking sites to make fun of someone and each person contributing to these pages can soon exacerbate the problem. Inappropriate and threatening comments and images can also be posted and circulated about individuals without their consent.
- Mobile phone – Anonymous and abusive text or video messages and photo messages and phone calls can be shared via mobile phones. This also includes the sharing of videos of physical and sexual attacks (which is a criminal offence) on individuals (includes happy slapping).
- Interactive gaming - Games consoles allow players to chat online with anyone they find themselves matched with in a multi-player game. Sometimes cyber bullies abuse other players and use threats. They can also lock victims out of games, spread false rumors' about someone or hack into someone's account.

- Sending viruses – Viruses or hacking programs can be sent by one person to another in order to destroy their computers or delete personal information from their hard drive.
- Abusing personal information – Personal and sensitive information (including videos and photographs) could be uploaded onto the internet without the victims permission.
- Social networking sites such as Facebook make it very simple for other users to obtain personal information and photographs of others. They can also get hold of someone else's messaging accounts and chat to people pretending to be the victim.

Although cyber bullying of itself can not physically hurt a person, it can leave a young person mentally vulnerable, frightened and lonely and seemingly very difficult to escape from, particularly when this occurs in their own home and can lead to the bullied victim causing harm to themselves, which in some cases may lead to suicide.

However some instances of Cyberbullying are associated with or are linked to gang affiliation and 'real world' bullying and can rapidly escalate into physical revenge as recent high profile violent (and sometimes fatal) cases highlight. These cases are stark reminders that Cyberbullying cannot and must not be minimised.

There is no simple answer as to why some young people choose to bully other young people. However, all organisations working with young people should ensure they have recognised policies and procedures to challenge **any** form of bullying on their premises. Professionals should also be able to recognise signs and symptoms of bullying and have confidence in dealing with this. (Refer to the Recognition and Response BSCB policy for signs and indicators of bullying or refer to your own organisations).

All incidents of cyber bullying must be recorded and if necessary, escalated to the police if a criminal offence is suspected. ([See Appendix 4](#)).

DfE and Childnet have produced resources and guidance that can be used to give practical advice and guidance on Cyberbullying:
<http://www.digizen.org/cyberbullying>

There is also an excellent award winning short film that helps sensitise people to the hurt and distress that can be caused by Cyberbullying. The film shows ways in which Cyberbullying can occur, who it involves, how it can affect different people, and what can be done to prevent it and respond to it.
<http://www.digizen.org/resources/cyberbullying/films/uk/lfit-film.aspx>