

INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR FOSTER CARERS

Purpose

We understand that the world is changing and so is the way that we communicate. The internet and various forms of social media have become an integral part of both gathering and sharing information. Therefore, it is vital that in order to ensure your safety and privacy and that of a child or young person in your care that social media and Internet use is reviewed regularly.

Legislation

The law does not require social media and internet checks to be undertaken on foster carers. However, Regulation 26(2)(c) of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (as amended) permits the fostering service to obtain “any other information considered relevant”. This is also linked to Standard 2 (Promoting a positive identity, potential and valuing diversity through individualised care) and Standard 3 (Promoting positive behaviour and relationships) of the Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011.

What checks will be involved and how will they be carried out?

As well as the other regulatory checks we complete prior to your review, we will also complete a social media checklist (please see local resources section). This will be undertaken by your supervising social worker, who will be inputting personal details such as your name (as well as that of a member of your household or of a person who will have access to a child in your care) into a search engine such as Google, and viewing any websites that link to this name. We may also search sites and social media platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), YouTube, Tiktok and others in a similar way.

Good practice for foster carers

Set maximum privacy settings and limit access to your posts; other settings may open your content to a wider audience and your privacy and that of your family, friends and children in your care could be compromised.

Review your security and confidentiality settings regularly and reset them if necessary.

Foster carers should consider the consequences before posting anything on social networking sites and the impression it may give to those who access the information. Remember that anything posted online could end up in the public domain to be read by birth parents, children / young people or your social worker.

Be careful what you share; for example you should not share any information relating to your fostering role and daily routines or which can identify a child or former child in your care.

Information and photographs of children in care must never be posted on social media sites without written consent from the local authority, parents and the children, if they are of an appropriate age. Once an image is on the internet it can be viewed and stored by other people within their friends' network and may reveal the location of the child / young person. Think about the implications of this for your own safety and that of the children you are caring for.

Carers' immediate family and friends, who are aware of their fostering role, should also be reminded of expectations around social media and the dangers of identifying a fostered child.

Professionalism

Whenever you go online, professionally or personally, you must use your judgement and think carefully about what you are posting and how it reflects on the Council. You should be mindful to make clear that any views posted are your own and not those of the Council and make sure that any comments you make, do not bring the Council into disrepute.

If there is a cause for concern identified via social media checks or internet checks, then this will be discussed with the respective team manager by the supervising social worker. The team manager will then consider the concerns process.

At all times the welfare of the child(ren) in placement remains of paramount importance throughout any enquiries. Information revealed which is a cause for concern, will be discussed with foster carer(s) at the first available opportunity, if safe to do so. Causes for concern might include any inappropriate material whether in video, photo, or written form, including views and opinions, whether implicit or explicit, that are not conducive to the role of a foster carer. Any breaches of confidentiality or the publication of material that is a cause for concern, may affect a carer's approval status and placements.