



Haringey Council

Agenda item:

Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee

On 7 December 2009

Report Title: Accessing of social networking sites by Children in Care	
Forward Plan reference number (if applicable): n/a	
Report of: The Director of The Children and Young People's Service	
Wards(s) affected: All	Report for: Information
1. Purpose (That is, the decision required) Haringey's CYPS have been looking into giving young people in children's homes and foster care access to social networking sites.	
2. Recommendations Members of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee are asked to approve the report.	
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Background

SAFE SITE – ACCESS TO FACEBOOK

All children's homes and foster carer households are provided with computers for the use of children in placement. In order to protect our vulnerable children, there are restrictions on accessing certain sites.

Due to the demand from children in care, we have considered their request to enable access to social networking sites to enable them to use Facebook. We have reviewed recent research 'The Experience of South West School with the Social Networking Site' (report is available on request) to inform our plans. We intend to lift the restriction on social networking sites and filter access for accessing *My Space* and *Facebook* to our children's homes and foster carers homes.

We have a contract with Freely IT Services PC Consulting and Support who install PCs in our children's homes and foster carers homes. They are able to monitor the use of these sites

Safeguarding

We have provided foster carers and residential staff with training and support as above to monitor children's usage of the internet. We have also produced guidance for young people, foster carers and staff to support safe use (attached). We will be restricting used of Facebook to children and young people aged 11 years and over.

We are also proposing that children and young people are encouraged to allow a trusted adult *friend* (social worker, teacher, school mentor with whom they share a good relationship), to be accepted as a friend on their Facebook page. The *friend* would be able to monitor and provide guidance about Facebook activities, helping to keep them safe. We understand that we will not be able to enforce this request, but it is important to provide this guidance.

All foster carers and residential staff have a copy of the Fostering Network Safe Caring booklet that provides helpful information about safe use and websites that will provide additional information.

Once approved we will be able to allow access to all children and young people in foster placements within a couple of weeks.

3. Use of Appendices / Tables / Photographs

Appendix 1 WebBlocker Policy – Internet Filtering Policy by category

Appendix 2 Social Networking and the Internet – Some thoughts for teenagers

Appendix 3 Acceptable Use Policy for Carers