



**Haringey Council**

Briefing for:	<b>Corporate Parenting Advisory Committee</b>
Title:	<b>Outline proposal to develop a strategy for safeguarding Looked After children, young people and care leavers when supporting and enabling them to access Information and Communication Technology.</b>
Lead Officer:	<b>Debbie Haith</b>
Date:	<b>24 January 2011</b>

## **1. Background:**

1.1 A strategy will be developed in response to the need to ensure that Looked After Children, including children with disabilities and those receiving overnight short breaks, are provided with the opportunity to use computers and access the internet as tools for learning and communication whilst managing the potential risks. Although it will never be possible to remove e-safety (internet safety) risks completely, drawing together an effective package of policies, practices, education and training can lessen the impact of potential risks.

1.2 Safeguarding children and young people in the “virtual world” of the internet is a key element to staying safe for children and young people. This strategy has been developed with reference to the ICT Safety Strategies implemented in Haringey Schools and Local Safeguarding Children’s Board guidance on e-safety.

1.3 These aims apply in all circumstances but we know that the internet provides an additional means of communication with and access to children and young people increasing their vulnerability to exploitation, bullying and exposure to inappropriate content online.

1.4 Access to the internet can be by fixed or mobile technology such as mobile phones, which are e enabled. This strategy focuses on fixed technology i.e. computers.

1.5 Looked After Children and care leavers live and are cared for in a range of settings including family placements with foster carers and residential homes. Haringey will directly manage some of these placements, others will be provided under contracts with different providers. This Strategy provides a framework and set of principles in which to promote safe appropriate access to fixed technology and internet within a range of placement provisions.

## **2. Key Principles:**

- 2.1 Children and Young People should have the opportunity to use ICT to enhance their learning opportunities, develop ICT skills and communicate in the virtual environment.
- 2.2 Carers should be provided with opportunities to develop their own skills and knowledge in ICT; the more confident carers are with ICT, the more equipped they are to monitor young peoples' activities and support appropriate use of ICT.
- 2.3 All service providers should demonstrate how they support appropriate access to ICT and have a clear e-safety policy, which is understood by staff/carers and children and young people.
- 2.4 Haringey managed services will have local e-safety policies which will be standards based and reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that they respond to changes in technologies and safeguards.
- 2.5 Standards will reflect wider safeguarding issues including health and safety.
- 2.6 E-safety policies will describe how safeguarding concerns will be responded to and managed.

## **3. Internal Residential Homes:**

- 3.1 All residential homes will promote the educational value of IT usage and support young people in accessing these services and their key worker will assist them in this.
- 3.2 This should include having an open discussion with each Looked After Child about online use whilst in their care and have clear rules about online use for their homes. They will talk to the child about what they should do if they are worried following an online experience and what the supervision and monitoring arrangements will be.
- 3.3 Any computers will be in an open and public part of the residential home.
- 3.4 Given the communal nature of residential care, staff will be aware of the potential for inappropriate collective use amongst a group of young people and should supervise the use with this in mind.
- 3.5 Each residential home should evidence how they will incorporate any risks associated with internet use and staff should be willing to withhold use of the computer for particular residents or groups of residents until safety measures have been put in place.
- 3.6 Staff should be alert to the potential risk of a Looked After Child leaving the home to meet someone following time spent online and be vigilant about who the young person is going to meet if they have cause to be suspicious.

3.7 Internet access via lap tops will not be allowed.

#### **4. Internal Family Placements:**

##### **4.1 Fostering:**

4.1.1 Supervising social workers will undertake a checklist for each Haringey foster carer as either part of the assessment process or post-approval (if an existing foster carer) to gauge the foster carer's basic competence and confidence in Information Technology.

4.1.2 This will include a judgement on the carers understanding of the balance between potential risks alongside the educational benefits. The expectation is that all foster carers promote positive and safe internet use as part of a Looked After Child's development.

4.1.3 The Fostering Team will provide information on agencies that support safety in IT usage for Looked After Children including Chatdanger website, Kidsmart website, Childnet International website, Thinkyouknow website, Parents Online website.

4.1.4 Under Standard 6 of the CWDC Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care each foster carer will be expected to evidence how they will incorporate any risks associated with internet use in their home. Their Supervising Social Worker will assist them with this.

4.1.5 Foster carers need to be aware of the young person's use of any mobile technology in their home and offer a level of appropriate monitoring.

4.1.6 Each foster carer will have an open discussion with each Looked After Child about online use whilst in their care and have clear online rules for their home. They will talk to the child about what they should do if they are worried following an online experience and what the supervision and monitoring arrangements will be.

4.1.7 Should a foster carer store any records or information relating to the Looked After Child on their computer, they will do this in a secure and separate place where any child in the household is unable to access it.

##### **4.2 Adoption:**

4.2.1 Adopters of a child of any age will be made aware of the future specific issues related to an adopted child.

4.2.2 The emphasis will be on ensuring an adopted child is supported and kept safe throughout their childhood in any efforts to locate information or people relating to their history.

4.2.3 These will include the specific areas of adoption practice issues such as:

- contacting birth family members
- tracing in the future
- any internet research relating to medical issues.
- any physical risk or risk to their emotional identity as an adopted child.

#### **5. Contracted Services:**

5.1 Each provider of either an Independent Fostering Agency placement or a Private and Voluntary residential placement will be expected to provide Haringey

Placements Service with a copy of their specific Information Technology policy as part of any agreement to use their services.

5.2 This will be scrutinised by the Team Manager of the Placements Team to verify it is of a similar standard to any in-house resource offered.

5.3 If the provider is unable to offer a satisfactory standard of written expectations within the service being offered, they will be expected to adopt and comply with Haringey's policy for the Haringey Looked After Child.

**Debbie Haith**

**December 2010**