

Safeguarding your organisation

Guidance on promoting safety for children, young people and vulnerable adults online

Interactive social media technology has revolutionised the way people connect and interact. Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, blogs, instant messaging and photo and video exchange sites are increasingly popular, and provide an opportunity to connect with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

However the use of social networking sites also brings with it a range of potential safeguarding risks to children, young people and vulnerable adults.

This fact sheet aims to provide you with advice and guidance about how you can make the most of networking sites, while safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Get to know the service you want to provide – once you've identified the service you want to use (e.g. Facebook), make sure you're up to speed with the way this service operates, and the potential safeguarding implications for children, young people, vulnerable adults and staff before setting up your presence.

Specifically, you should look at privacy and safety tools, the terms of service (these will usually cover acceptable and unacceptable behaviour), and how users can contact the service if they have a concern or complaint

Decide who will manage your social media - Decide who will be responsible for setting up, managing and moderating (overseeing / reviewing /responding to posted content) your web page or profile. This person will oversee the content that will appear, will decide which links to other sites to accept, and will have online contact with the children, young people and vulnerable adults who interact with your webpage or profile. Ensure they understand online safeguarding issues, including warning signs of grooming and sexual exploitation and they have a DBS check to the appropriate level.

Don't target underage children – social networking services usually have a minimum requirement age of 13

Avoid taking personal details of children and young people - Don't ask users to divulge any personal details - including home and email addresses, schools or mobile numbers

Be careful how you use images of children, young people and vulnerable adults

Photographs and videos of children, young people and vulnerable adults on websites can be used to identify them and make them vulnerable to people who wish to groom them for abuse. To counteract this risk, Dudley Safeguarding Children Board use of images guidance must be considered before any images are used on websites.

- consider using models or illustrations to promote an activity
- if a child or vulnerable adult is named, do not use their image
- if an image is used, do not name the child or vulnerable adult
- obtain parents' written consent to use photographs on web sites

Images showing children and young people under the age of 18 and vulnerable adults should not be used on any organisations social networking site e.g. FaceBook, flickr, twitter due to the potential for:

- the tagging of children and young people and vulnerable adults thus identifying them at a location and allowing the opportunity for abusers to identify and locate them on social networking sites
- the morphing of the image
- personal intimidation by posting derogatory, abusive and threatening comments
- cyber bullying

For the above reasons and the potential to post images of bullying and other inappropriate live incidents that occur offline, there should not be the ability for users to upload their own images on an organisation's website or social networking site.

For more details and a sample use of images permission forms, see the DSCB use of images guidance.