

Social Networking Websites and Communication Technology

Guidelines for a Code of Conduct for those who work with children and young people.

Social Networking

Social networking is everywhere. It is common to find parents, children, co-workers and others on such sites. With social networks people across the world have access to tools and options that were previously non-existent. However, there are now just as many new opportunities to connect as there are to get into potential danger. One thing we often forget while having fun on social networks is that almost anybody can see what we are doing. While we are tagging photos for our friends or are posting comments to them, it can be easy to forget that someone else who has been invited onto a social networking site can also view them.

Once something appears on the Internet, it's almost impossible to remove. As these sites continue to grow in popularity, so too does the value of the information on them to parties other than those directly involved. Social networking users need to take a step back and think about just what they're posting onto the Internet.

Guidelines

The following guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct for your service, school or organisation.

People who work with children and young people should always maintain appropriate professional boundaries, avoid improper contact or relationships and respect their position of trust.

With regard to relationships, individuals who work with children and young people should not attempt to establish an inappropriate relationship which might include:

- communication of a personal nature
- inappropriate dialogue through the internet
- the sending of emails or text messages of an inappropriate nature

Individuals who work with children and young people, should be extremely careful in corresponding with people on social networking sites. Staff relationships with children and young people should at all times remain professional and they should **not** correspond with children and young people through such sites or add them as 'friends'. It is worth bearing in mind that on such sites an inappropriate or even misconstrued communication may have the potential to impact upon their careers or even result in criminal investigation. In addition staff should bear in mind who may access their own profiles on such websites and should therefore take care as to the information they display about themselves and their personal lives. They should also ensure that they have installed and are using the appropriate privacy settings.

Individuals who work with children and young people, should not make, view or access illegal or inappropriate images of children.

Individuals who work with children and young people and others, with whom they may be in a position of trust, should exercise caution when using social networking sites and avoid inappropriate communication of any kind.