Digital Technology

(e-Safety)

Introduction

Protecting young people from e-bullying and the dangers of the digital world has become much more relevant recently with a number of high profile incidents that have been in the press. As a result the Pear Tree management team has spent some time researching this subject and organising training with a consultant to ensure we have the up to date information required to keep our staff informed and our young people safe.

The following document is designed to bring together the information currently held in different policies and procedures, bringing it under one e-safety document.

It must be remembered that abuse and bullying of any kind happens within a context and that technology has added another dimension to the tools available to those that abuse others, and another level of concern for those that were and are already vulnerable. The abusers are more powerful and the vulnerable more vulnerable, therefore the importance of empowering the vulnerable giving them the coping skills, self protection skills and pragmatic advice to deal with how they interact with the world around them and reinforcing the foundation of general life skills should not be underestimated.

Therefore, the advice in other documents on dealing with disclosures of abuse and confronting bullying are still relevant and should be remembered and considered separately when required.

This is a constantly changing world as new technology develops and is embraced by all. But the principals of right and wrong transcend the centuries without alteration. As long as we remember this and are not blinded by science, continue to use our moral code, we should be able to deal with our digital codes and dilemmas!

David Bartlett, June 2013.
Reviewed October 2019/November 2020/November 2021

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Guidance and Good Practice

Employee Handbook

E-Safety Coordinators are:

The Manor: Gary Ramsbottom
The Sycamores: Steven Sturman
Oakwood House: Diana Hewick-Crawford
Heather House: Sean Cooper
Penally: Lesley Holywell
Holly Tree House: Steven Bradwell
Pear Tree School @ Toy Top Farm: Fiona Corner/Philip Tebbs

General Computer Use

Staff should ensure that permission is sought prior to young people using the computer, so usage and content can be monitored. This should be explained to all young people in a recorded session.

Do not allow food or drink to be consumed when young people are using the computer and/or allow such items to be placed on the computer station.

Staff to be aware that young people may need to have access to CD's or USB drives. Staff should provide disks if required for schoolwork. If young people are using their own disks/CD's can staff be aware that they may contain viruses and check who issued this equipment.

Remember that any removable drives need to be removed before shutting down the computer. Staff to ensure that the young people adhere to this to prevent any corruption of the disc or hard drive during the shutting down process.

Staff to ensure young people know how to switch off the computer in the correct way.

The computer should not be moved or removed without the approval of the Registered Manager.

Staff to ensure that the computer is reserved for the use of home/school work before any other activity.

Internet Use

Use of the internet by the young people who reside in the home. As carers' you should liaise when Head Office to ensure that parental controls are set to the appropriate age and appropriate time restrictions enabled. Also, that appropriate filters are installed to control the type of sites that are visited and that the effectiveness of these filters are monitored and that they are updated regularly and recorded.

If Internet use is monitored this is done via Netnanny and a log is held centrally of all internet searches, within the last 30 days, it can be accessed if required for the purposes of inspection or investigation. The log contains details of the search, the name of the young person, the device, date and time.

The modem for the cable connection or the modem for the wireless connection to the internet is to be in the staff room when possible, or the network access information removed. When a young person asks to use the internet, if NetNanny is used, they must be witnessed logging on to their own parental control account. When they are finished it must be witnessed/checked that they have logged out of their own parental control account.

When possible, if a child or young person has access to a personal device that can obtain access to the internet, the device must contain suitable filters and or restrictions.

The following should be discussed with the young people in a recorded session: -

Staff to ensure the young person always seeks permission prior to using the Internet. If any specific concerns, usage and content should be monitored.

Whilst supervising Internet usage, if staff notice or are made aware that a young person has received nasty, rude or suggestive e-mails, they should report this to manager and the young people should be advised not to respond.

Young people need to be informed of the dangers of using the Internet and that they should never give out any personal information including address, telephone number, school etc. Young people need to be aware that they should never give anyone their photograph or Bank details.

Computers and parental controls/content filters are password protected to the individual user. Young people need to be informed by a member of staff of the password and never to give out this password to anyone as others could use it inappropriately.

Staff to inform young people that they should never meet anyone they have chatted to over the Internet. Young people need to be made aware of the dangers of 'chat' rooms and social networking websites.

Staff to inform young people of the risks of viruses whilst using the computer or the Internet and ensure that young people do not open attachments. Attachments should be saved to a disc. After doing so, they can then virus scan the document before opening it. This will enable any virus to be detected before they have an opportunity to corrupt the computer.

Staff to be vigilant when young people are using the Internet. Young people should not have unlimited access to the computer/Internet and should be supervised if necessary whilst using the Internet.

Staff should be available to assist young people if required. If staff cannot assist a young person because they lack the necessary skill/understanding of the Internet, please seek appropriate guidance.

Staff to ensure that the computer screen can be seen at all times — it should not be hidden from view.

Staff to ensure the computer is turned off after use.

Use of the Internet should be regularly discussed by staff in young people's house meetings and individually. This will provide both staff and young people with an opportunity to discuss the benefits and advantages of having Internet access. In addition, both dangers and disciplinary measures for the misuse of the Internet can be discussed.

Watching movies

Everything we provide for children must be considered within the context of Pear Tree's recovery programme. It is part of that philosophy that we promote age-appropriate activities and this must apply when watching movies on television, hired or streamed movies or buying movies for a child's present.

Any movie being viewed by the children must be age-appropriate and this is determined by the advice given on the label, i.e. 12, 15, 18. It is unacceptable for a child to be shown a movie if they are under the age restriction that applies. This is detrimental in a number of ways, not only from the content of the video, but also from the fact that we promote a respect for authority and guidance and, in these circumstances, it would be outside what is considered to be the advice given.

We insist that respect is given to the 9.00 p.m. British broadcasting watershed and therefore common sense will dictate that the greater the length of time after 9.00 p.m. the presentation is shown is, by some way, meant to give guidance as to the appropriateness of viewing. Therefore, it makes sense that if programmes are recorded after the watershed, that consideration be given as to whether or not it is appropriate for younger children to watch, e.g. recordings at 9.00 p.m. or afterwards would not be appropriate for any younger child to watch and consideration should be given as to whether or not they are suitable for teenagers depending on their maturity and the appropriateness of the programme.

We must also remind people that the term "PG" makes reference to parental guidance. With younger children, any movies or programmes rated PG should be watched with an adult where areas of difficulty may be explained to the child by the adult or the adult should have the opportunity to view the programme beforehand and decide on its appropriateness. It does not automatically mean that the film is appropriate for a child to view without any consideration given to the issues that may be raised by the programme/movie.

Use of Electronic Games

Young people are now spending more and more time using these types of games to occupy their spare time. As professional carers we have a responsibility to ensure that each game is used responsibly. All games and packaging should be checked for health warnings, these warnings should then be followed or the young person should be advised of the warning. Dependant on the maturity and level of understanding of the young person, the warning should be enforced or advice given and the young person be allowed to make their decision, then their decision recorded in the daily log.

Age appropriate games (PEGI)

As with the previous policy it is Pear Tree's philosophy to promote respect to the advice that is given. Computer games often hold such advice **(PEGI)** and, whilst at the time of writing this policy it is currently a voluntary code, it is nonetheless advice that should be respected.

Therefore, if video games are brought in for young people who have not reached the chronological age that the advice dictates, they should not be allowed to play such games. There are many reasons for this.

As stated above we have tried to create an environment where the ethos is consistent with promoting respect to advice from Authorities. In addition to this, video games may have two other themes for us to consider.

- An academic requirement whereby puzzles need to be worked out, which may require the child to be of certain age to be able to complete the game. If the child is not of that age it may be that the game is beyond the ability of the child and therefore we would be setting unachievable goals that may cause frustration.

- Another theme could be that of dramatic and graphic violence which, for the vast majority of young people, would not normally be detrimental. As the young people in our care have experienced traumas, this kind of violence may not be considered to be in the overall ethos that is hoped to benefit the child. This may be particularly relevant to games that involve hand-to-hand combat, which may have a negative influence on young people who have aggressive or behavioural difficulties.

In addition to this we also want young people to acknowledge their own chronological age. Many of the young people who are referred to Pear Tree have not had the opportunity to be a child and therefore it would be inappropriate to promote the idea that a child may be much older than they actually are.

Policy on pornographic material

Pornographic material of any nature is not allowed in Pear Tree homes. The term pornographic would imply the exposure of the genitals or explicit postures that indicate sexual activity. The term pornographic material would not include exposed bodies that may appear in tabloid newspapers or teenage magazines that are accessible to all.

The issue of whether or not young people should be allowed to display posters of young people of the opposite sex, or in some cases, the same sex, wearing little if any clothing, is of course a matter that is regularly discussed. Pear Tree's policy is that such material that could be found displayed in age appropriate magazines, publications etc, that are readily available and sold across the counter to young people, would be something that should not be restricted, however, guidance should be given on appropriate positioning of such posters.

The fine line between allowing young people a normal developmental pathway without encouraging or promoting inhibitions and that of displaying what could be thought to be pornographic material, comes down to the exposure of the genital area and the implication of the posture.

Advice regarding mobile phones

The primary goal is that we aim to create as many opportunities for young people as we can in line with their peers and young people in a 'family' environment. Therefore, the acquisition and possession of a mobile phone should not automatically be ruled out. However, the following factors may also need to be given great consideration:

Young People should not use their mobile phone during school time.

When possible, parental controls or age appropriate restrictions enabled

Staff should explain the following to young people in a recorded session –

Staff should monitor the usage of the young persons mobile phone. Phones are permitted for use in the house at staff's discretion.

Staff reserve the right to make sure that cameras on mobile phones are being used correctly and not for use which would interfere with other persons privacy or personal space, or break the law. Failure to do so may result in the young person losing their phone indefinitely.

Staff to be aware that phones have access to the Internet. This is to be treated in the same way as Internet usage on computers and should be monitored.

Staff to be aware that some mobile phones have a voice recorder or video camera recording. This is to be treated in the same way as a camera. Anything which breaks the law will be passed on to the police and involve Child Protection if necessary.

Mobile phones need to be restricted from any young people to whom telephone calls need to be monitored either by way of supporting a child during telephone contact to relatives, by listening in to specific telephone calls as requested by the local authority or court.

If any of the above factors are relevant to either a particular child or any child within their home then mobile phones should not be permitted to be purchased or be in possession of a child. If the above factors are not relevant then consideration may be given for the child to purchase or have given, as a gift, a mobile phone. In these circumstances consideration should be given to providing appropriate advice in respect of the fact that the usability may be something that should be discussed as an issue in helping young people make firm decisions for themselves about the appropriate use of their own available spending money.

If mobile phones are allowed, young people should then be encouraged to use this phone as their main phone to contact friends. For contact with social worker, relatives or any other professional bodies, young people should be encouraged to use the household phone. If members of staff are taking young people on trips out and a child is in possession of a mobile phone the member of staff that is responsible for their care needs to determine

whether or not it is appropriate for the child to bring the phone with them. There may be some circumstances where bringing a phone should be encouraged as part of accepted modern life, other circumstances may result in a member of staff feeling that the possession of this phone may inhibit or hinder the plans for the day ahead. This may be particularly relevant for young people with behavioural difficulties or young people having difficulties dealing with power, control and manipulation.

The possession of a mobile phone in a Pear Tree home needs to be assessed and monitored and decisions made accordingly on the basis of the mature (or lack of mature) attitude toward such items. The possession of a mobile phone in a Pear Tree home is a privilege and should be acknowledged as such and abuse of the phone would influence an assessed decision accordingly (as it would in any other home by any other parent.)

In line with recent advice for health reasons, the permission for a mobile phone should only be granted to young people above the age of 14 years.

Reference Documentation.

Adapted from Darlington Borough Councils Policies

Digital Imaging

Digital imaging to include any form of capturing images, including digital cameras, cameras on mobile phones, video cameras , webcams etc.

With the development of digital technology and advancements in photography, mobile phones, video cameras, webcams etc., has brought about many issues for us to consider, particularly in the relation of capturing images of young people in our care. Consideration should be given to the following points.

Digital cameras or cameras of any kind should not be allowed to be used in the home by the children unless under strict supervision and the ownership of the camera and memory card should remain the property of the home and the responsibility of those running the home. Children should be encouraged to use cameras to compile work for life story work etc, however the ownership and as such the decision making process should remain in the control of the adults. Careful consideration being given to any distribution of such images. I.e. photographs home to parents etc. may be appropriate providing it does not give information of other children.

Staff Responsibilities

All professional people are involved with the responsibilities of handling, dealing and looking after confidential information. Digital imagery of any kind should be considered in a similar way. Previously confidentiality has been confined to information in written form about

backgrounds, experiences, incidents etc. Digital imagery has brought us to consider the fact that we are capturing information about young people that can viewed in a visual form and transferred and perhaps even used inappropriately very easily. Therefore when dealing with digital imagery staff should recognise that they are handling in essence confidential information about a young person and it should be treated as such with careful consideration being given at each step of the way when deciding what to do with such information.

For example members of staff may come to work with mobile phones with digital cameras attached, it may be on occasions appropriate to take photographs of children with such cameras with the intention of providing images to be used for the children, however, if that information is then circulated outside of that context i.e. downloaded onto the internet, e-mailing to other people, for whatever purpose, who are not involved in the care and welfare of the children that should be considered to be a breach of confidentiality. Likewise images taken on mobile phones with video attachments or camcorders should be viewed in a similar light. Downloading onto the internet at any point in time for any reason should be considered to be inappropriate and a breach of confidentiality. (Unless it is our own restricted access website for professional use only.)

Disposal of I.T. equipment

When computers used for company business, that may have stored confidential information, have come to the end of their working life, they must be returned to Head Office, where the hard drive is to be removed and stored in the archive department. The remaining equipment is then to be disposed of via municipal waste department.

Virus Protection Procedure

In order to prevent the introduction of virus contamination into the software system the following must be observed:-

   a.   Unauthorised software including public domain software, magazine cover disks/CDs or Internet/World Wide Web downloads must not be used.

   b.   All software must be virus checked using standard testing procedures before being used.

Staff use of computer equipment

In order to control the use of the Organisation's computer equipment and reduce the risk of contamination the following will apply:

   a) the introduction of new software must first of all be checked and authorised by the Head Office before general use will be permitted;

b) only authorised staff should have access to the Organisation's computer equipment;

c) only authorised software may be used on any of the Organisation's computer equipment;

d) only software that is used for business applications may be used;

e) no software may be brought onto or taken from the Organisation's premises without prior authorisation;

f) unauthorised access to the computer facility will result in disciplinary action; and

g) unauthorised copying and/or removal of computer equipment/software will result in disciplinary action; such actions could lead to dismissal.

Staff e-mail and internet policy

Introduction

The purpose of the Internet and E-mail policy is to provide a framework to ensure that there is continuity of procedures in the usage of Internet and e-mail within the Organisation. The internet and e-mail system have established themselves as an important communications facility within the Organisation and have provided us with contact with professional and academic sources throughout the world. Therefore, to ensure that we are able to utilise the system to its optimum we have devised a policy that provides maximum use of the facility whilst ensuring compliance with the legislation throughout.

Internet

Where appropriate, duly authorised staff are encouraged to make use of the Internet as part of their official and professional activities. Attention must be paid to ensuring that published information has relevance to normal professional activities before material is released in the Organisation's name. Where personal views are expressed a disclaimer stating that this is the case should be clearly added to all correspondence. The intellectual property right and copyright must not be compromised when publishing on the Internet. The availability and variety of information on the Internet has meant that it can be used to obtain material reasonably considered to be offensive. The use of the Internet to access and/or distribute any kind of offensive material, or material that is not work-related, leaves an individual liable to disciplinary action which could lead to dismissal.

Procedures – Acceptable/Unacceptable Use

h) Unauthorised or inappropriate use of the internet system may result in disciplinary action which could result in summary dismissal.

i) The internet system is available for legitimate business use and matters concerned directly with the job being done. Employees using the internet system should give particular attention to the following points:

    i) comply with all of our internet standards;

    ii) private use of the internet should be used outside of your normal working hours;

    iii) you should not access websites which put our internet at risk of (but not limited to) viruses, compromising our copyright or intellectual property rights; and

    iv) you should not access or transmit pornography.

E-mail

The use of the e-mail system is encouraged as its appropriate use facilitates efficiency. Used correctly it is a facility that is of assistance to employees. Inappropriate use however causes many problems including distractions, time wasting and legal claims. The procedure sets out the Organisation's position on the correct use of the e-mail system.

Procedures - Authorised Use

j) Unauthorised or inappropriate use of the e-mail system may result in disciplinary action which could include summary dismissal.

k) The e-mail system is available for communication and matters directly concerned with the legitimate business of the Organisation. Employees using the e-mail system should give particular attention to the following points:

    i) comply with all Organisation communication standards;

    ii) e-mail messages and copies should only be sent to those for whom they are particularly relevant;

    iii) e-mail should not be used as a substitute for face-to-face communication or telephone contact. Abusive e-mails must not be sent. Hasty messages sent without proper consideration can cause upset, concern or misunderstanding;

    iv) if the e-mail is confidential the user must ensure that the necessary steps are taken to protect confidentiality. The Organisation will be liable for infringing copyright or any defamatory information that is circulated either within the Organisation or to external users of the system; and

    v) offers or contracts transmitted by e-mail are as legally binding on the Organisation as those sent on paper.

c) The Organisation will not tolerate the use of the e-mail system for unofficial or inappropriate purposes, including:

i) any messages that could constitute bullying, harassment or other detriment;

ii) personal use (e.g. social invitations, personal messages, jokes, cartoons, chain letters or other private matters);

iii) on-line gambling;

iv) accessing or transmitting pornography;

v) transmitting copyright information and/or any software available to the user; or

vi) posting confidential information about other employees, the Organisation, the children or young people or the Organisation's suppliers.

Monitoring

We reserve the right to monitor all e-mail/internet activity by you for the purposes of ensuring compliance with our policies and procedures and of ensuring compliance with the relevant regulatory requirements. This includes monitoring of any additional accounts you may be requested to set up for the purposes of performing your work tasks, which are subject to the same rules as your work email account. Information acquired through such monitoring may be used as evidence in disciplinary proceedings. Monitoring your usage will mean processing your personal data. You may read more about the data we hold on you, why we hold it and the lawful basis that applies in the employee privacy notice.

Staff use of social networking sites

Any work related issue or material that could identify an individual who is a child or young person or work colleague, which could adversely affect any of the above or the Organisation must not be placed on a social networking site. This means that work related matters must not be placed on any such site at any time either during or outside of working hours and includes access via any computer equipment or mobile device. Employees are not permitted to add parents as friends on social networking sites.

Under no circumstances should you post negative or derogatory comments relating to the Organisation or your employment with us, as comments such as these can have a detrimental impact on our reputation, even if you are not directly linked to clients of the Organisation. This includes posting information following the end of your employment. Similarly thought

should always be given to any images and pictures you upload, consideration should be given to the need to maintain a professional and responsible image.

Members of staff who are connected to colleagues, children and young people via social media should ensure that any posts do not affect the morale of those individuals.