

Community Pre-schools Online Safety Policy

Community Pre-schools have a responsibility to provide a safe, nurturing environment where children can explore technology as part of their learning and development. The Online Safety Policy sets out clear guidelines for staff, children, parents, and visitors to ensure the responsible and secure use of technology.

Policy Statement

Community pre-schools are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children. Online safety, also referred to as e-safety or internet safety, is an essential aspect of this safeguarding. The policy aims to:

- Protect children from potentially harmful or inappropriate online content and contact.
- Ensure that technology is used as a positive tool for learning and development.
- Educate staff, children, and parents about online risks and responsible technology use.
- Set clear expectations for acceptable use of digital devices and the internet.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All staff, volunteers, and students working at the pre-school.
- Children attending the pre-school.
- Parents and carers.
- Visitors to the setting.

It covers the use of the internet, electronic communications (including email and messaging apps), digital cameras, tablets, computers, smartphones, and all other digital devices.

Roles and Responsibilities

Community Pre-schools appoint a member of staff as the Designated Online Safety Lead (OSL) to oversee the implementation and monitoring of this policy, as well as to act as the main point of contact for any online safety concerns.

Staff and Volunteers

All staff and volunteers must:

- Understand and adhere to the Online Safety Policy.
- Complete regular online safety training and updates.
- Supervise children closely when using technology.
- Model positive and responsible online behaviour.
- Report concerns or incidents to the OSL or designated safeguarding lead.

Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are encouraged to:

- Engage with the pre-school's online safety initiatives.
- Support the responsible use of technology at home.
- Report any online safety concerns or incidents involving their child to the pre-school.

Children

While very young, children will be guided to:

- Use technology under adult supervision.
- Understand basic rules about sharing, privacy, and respect when using digital devices.

Safe Use of Technology

Internet Access

- Children's access to the internet will be strictly supervised and limited to age-appropriate content.
- Pre-schools will use filtering software to block unsuitable material.
- Internet use will always be purposeful, supporting curriculum activities.

Digital Devices

- All digital devices (including cameras, tablets, and computers) used within the setting must be secure and password protected.
- No personal devices belonging to staff, volunteers, or children are permitted for pre-school use unless authorised by management for specific purposes.

Email and Online Communications

- Children will not have access to email or messaging without direct adult supervision.
- Any necessary communication will be managed through secure, pre-approved channels.

Protecting Children's Privacy and Data

Personal Data

- All personal information held by Community Pre-schools (including photographs and digital records) will be stored securely and accessed only by authorised personnel.
- Parental consent will be obtained before any images or work of children are published online or shared outside the pre-school.
- Staff will be trained in data protection and privacy regulations relevant to early years settings.

Education and Training

Staff Training

- All staff and volunteers will receive induction and ongoing training in online safety and digital safeguarding practices.
- Training will be updated regularly to reflect new risks and technological developments.

Teaching Children

- Children will be taught, through age-appropriate activities and stories, about basic online safety concepts, such as asking an adult for help and not sharing personal information.
- Online safety will be embedded into the curriculum and daily routines.

Supporting Parents

- The pre-school will provide parents with guidance and resources about online safety, including newsletters, workshops, and recommended websites.
- Parents are encouraged to ask questions and participate in discussions about technology use.

Acceptable Use Agreements

Acceptable Use Agreements (AUAs) will be developed for:

- Staff and volunteers
- Parents and carers
- Visitors

These agreements will outline the expectations for safe and responsible use of technology and must be signed before access is granted.

Dealing with Online Safety Incidents

Reporting

- All incidents, concerns, or breaches of the Online Safety Policy must be reported immediately to the OSL or the designated safeguarding lead.
- Reports will be treated seriously and investigated promptly, with records kept securely.

Responding

- Where appropriate, parents or carers will be informed of incidents affecting their child.
- Support will be provided for children or staff affected by online safety incidents.
- If necessary, external agencies (such as the police or social services) will be contacted.

Preventing Online Risks

- Regular reviews of online safety procedures and emerging risks.
- Up-to-date filtering and monitoring systems to reduce access to inappropriate content.
- Education for staff, children, and families about current risks such as cyberbullying, online predators, and inappropriate sharing.

Monitoring and Review

- The Online Safety Policy will be reviewed annually or more frequently if needed, in response to new risks or technological changes.
- Feedback from staff, parents, and children will be sought and considered as part of the review process.
- All incidents and near-misses will be logged and used to improve practice.

Links to Other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with other safeguarding policies, including:

- Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Data Protection and Privacy Policy
- Curriculum Policy

Policy Availability

- The Online Safety Policy will be available to all staff, parents, and visitors via the pre-school website and in paper format at the setting.
- All new staff and volunteers will be required to read and sign the policy as part of their induction.

Useful Resources

- UK Safer Internet Centre
- NSPCC Online Safety
- Childnet International
- Thinkuknow (CEOP)
- Get Safe Online

By following these guidelines, Community Pre-schools can help ensure that children are safe, secure, and empowered as they begin to explore the digital world. The protection of children's wellbeing remains paramount, and the policy will be regularly updated to respond to new challenges and opportunities in online safety.