

# E-Safety Policy

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Review schedule	Every year
Last review	March 2024
Next review due	March 2025
Owner	Karen Martin

## *INTRODUCTION*

Internet technology (IT) is now an integral part of children's lives and provides them with access to a wide range of information and increased opportunities for instant communication and social networking.

Using the internet can benefit children's education and social development, but it can also present several risks. Children are often unaware that they are as much at risk online as they are in the real world, and parents may not be aware of the actions they can take to protect them.

At SELFA, we promote our e-safety policy as a duty of care, promoting both the educational and social benefits of the internet and how this should be balanced against the need to safeguard the children.

Staff who work with children have a role in implementing this strategy by helping the children they work with to keep themselves safe on-line and dealing with safeguarding issues arising from e-safety incidents.

This document provides guidance to staff on how to recognise the risks of internet use and take action to reduce these risks. The guidance also sets out what actions should be taken where a child's use of the internet puts them at risk of significant harm.

## *BENEFITS AND RISKS*

Internet technology allows children access to information, electronic communications and social networking and can support their educational and social development. However, use of the internet also carries inherent risks:

### Content

The internet contains a vast store of information from all over the world which is mainly aimed at an adult audience and may be unsuitable for children. There is a danger that children may be exposed to inappropriate images such as pornography, or information

advocating violence, racism or illegal and antisocial behaviour that they are unable to evaluate in a critical manner.

### Contact

Chat rooms and other social networking sites can pose a real risk to children as users can take on an alias rather than their real names and can hide their true identity. The sites may be used by adults who pose as children in order to befriend and gain children's trust (known as "grooming") with a view to sexually abusing them. Children may not be aware of the danger of publishing or disclosing personal information about themselves, such as contact details, that allow them to be identified or located. They may also inadvertently put other children at risk by posting personal information and photographs without consent. The internet may also be used as a way of bullying a child, known as cyberbullying.

### Commerce

Children are vulnerable to unregulated commercial activity on the internet that could have serious financial consequences for themselves and their parents. They may give out financial information, for example their parent's credit card details, in response to offers for goods or services without seeing the fraudulent intent. Disclosing this information can lead to fraud or identity theft.

### Culture

Children need to be taught to use the internet in a responsible way, as they may put themselves at risk by:

- Becoming involved in inappropriate, anti-social or illegal activities as a result of viewing unsuitable materials or contact with inappropriate people
- Using information from the internet in a way that breaches copyright laws
- Uploading personal information about themselves, including photographs, on social networking sites without realising they are publishing to a potentially global audience
- Cyber bullying
- Use of mobile devices to take and distribute inappropriate images of the young person (sexting) that cannot be removed from the internet and can be forwarded on to a much wider audience than the child intended.
- Children may be adversely affected by obsessive use of the internet that may have a negative impact on their health, social and emotional development and their educational attainment.
- Children may visit sites that advocate extreme and dangerous behaviour such as self-harm or suicide or violent extremism, and more vulnerable children may be at a

high degree of risk from such sites. All children may become desensitised to pornography, violence, sex and drug use or self-harm by regularly viewing these online.

E-safety contributes to the “staying safe” element of good outcomes for children and SELFA continuously aims to raise and develop awareness for children and young people accessing the internet.

### [Children with special needs](#)

Children with learning difficulties or a disability may be more vulnerable to risk from use of the internet and may need additional guidance on e-safety practice as well as closer supervision. Staff may wish to discuss this with parents and carers and help them to access information and resources from specialist agencies.

### [E-safety Contact Officer](#)

SELFA’s designated E-safety Contact Officer, Karen Roberts, takes the lead for co-ordinating the development, implementation and review of e-safety policies within the charity.

All e-safety incidents should be reported to the E-safety Officer who will decide what action needs to be taken to improve e-safety practice and deal with individual incidents.

Where any e-safety incident has serious implications for the child’s safety or well-being, the e-safety/designated child protection lead for the service who will decide whether or not a referral should be made to FSSW or the Police.

The E-safety Contact Officer ensures that all activity leaders have obtained relevant E-safety training. Staff are reminded/updated about e-safety regularly and new staff receive information on SELFA’s how to stay Safe Online policy as part of their induction.

### [Preventative work with SELFA](#)

SELFA staff play an essential role in protecting children from abuse. They have regular contact with children and young people so are in a strong position to identify signs of abuse and neglect.

Staff at SELFA should:

- Create safe environments for children and young people through robust safeguarding practices
- Ensure that adults who work within the provision, including volunteers, don't pose a risk to children

- Make sure staff are trained, know how to respond to concerns and keep up-to-date with policy and practice
- Teach children and young people about staying safe
- Maintain an environment where children feel confident to approach any member of staff if they have a worry or problem.

Staff may have concerns about the internet use of a child with whom they work, and parents may express concerns themselves. It is important that staff are aware of the key risks and safety messages for children and parents in order to use the internet safely so that they can advise children and parents accordingly.

Activity Coordinators regularly organise for the local Police Community Support Officers to join our groups to give a talk on how to stay safe online, also giving the children/young people chance to ask any questions. These talks involve guidance on:

- The benefits and risks of using the internet
- How their behaviour can put themselves and others at risk
- What strategies they can use to keep themselves safe
- What to do if they are concerned about something they have seen or received via the internet
- Who to contact to report concerns
- That they won't be blamed if they report any e-safety incidents
- That cyberbullying cannot be tolerated
- How to behave on the internet

Staff at SELFA should be aware that some children may be more vulnerable to risk from internet use, generally those children with a high level of computer skills but coupled with poor social skills.

### [Referring an e-safety concern](#)

Whenever a professional at SELFA is concerned that a young person they work with is at risk of harm due to their internet use, they should discuss their concerns with the E-safety Contact Officer for their service and seek advice from NYCC Children and Young People's Service regarding whether to make a referral.

All referrals should be made to the NYCC Children and Young People's Service with a completed referral form sent within 48 hours.

The incident must be logged on Salesforce by the E-safety Contact Officer.

## Change Record

Date of change:	Changed by:	Comments
13/11/2017	Karen Roberts	Policy created
01/11/2018	Karen Roberts	Policy reviewed
16/05/2022	Karen Roberts	Policy reviewed. Ratified by the Board of Trustees 24/05/2022
09/03/2023	Karen Roberts	Policy reviewed. Ratified by the Board of Trustees 03/04/2023
01/03/2024	Karen Martin	Policy reviewed.