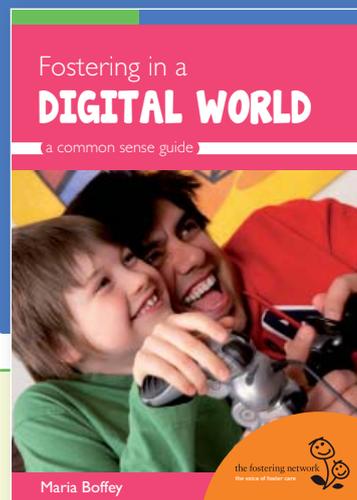


TOP TIPS

for fostering in a digital world

Fostering in a Digital World: a common sense guide focuses in detail on one particular aspect of safer caring: how to keep fostered children and young people as safe as possible in an increasingly digital world. Technologies and online services are developing at an ever-increasing pace, and this raises many questions for fostering:

- How can foster carers be empowered to take appropriate decisions about online contact, interacting on Facebook or Twitter, or taking part in online gaming?
- How can we enable fostered children and young people to take some risks as part of learning and growing up in a digital world?
- Where do fostering services and birth parents stand in all this?



To get you started, we'd like to share these 5 TOP TIPS for fostering in a digital world

- 1** Regularly **chat together about the kind of websites that your fostered child or young person visits**. Know how to set safety features on internet services and digital devices that they use (this includes computers, mobile phones and games consoles).
- 2** Enable the **parental controls** on all the wireless-enabled devices at home. Parental controls are a good way to stop the majority of inappropriate and harmful content coming into your home.
- 3** Advise your fostered child or young person to set their **social network profile settings** to private, so that only their friends can see who they are, their pictures and their updates.
- 4** Discuss with your fostered child or young person **what happens when images are shared online** – there is no control over where they go. Just because a photo is deleted on their mobile phone or social networking site, doesn't mean that it isn't stored elsewhere on the internet.
- 5** Reinforce the message that **online relationships are no different from real-world relationships**, so fostered children and young people should treat people online with the same respect as they would face-to-face: 'if you wouldn't say it, don't send it'.

To find out more about keeping fostered children safe online, order your copy of *Fostering in a Digital World: a common sense guide* today:

www.fosteringresources.co.uk

the fostering network
the voice of foster care



More about the guide

Fostering in a Digital World: a common sense guide is a comprehensive, practical guide providing foster carers and other professionals with essential information and tools to enable fostered children to benefit from using laptops, gaming consoles, tablets and mobile phones, while managing risk sensibly and effectively.

The guide includes clear, relevant advice on:

- the growth of digital technologies and online safety, including social networking, for fostered children
- understanding the managing the risks, including grooming, cyber-bullying, gaming and sexting
- what foster carers and other professionals need to be aware of as the digital world evolves.

The guide also includes *What You Can Do* checklists, interactive online templates, signposts to other useful resources and a handy jargon buster.

Fostering in a Digital World has been written primarily for foster carers, but will also be of interest to a wide range of people who work with looked-after children and young people. It is crucial reading for children's social workers, supervising social workers and all those working in fostering services, as well as staff of children's homes. It will also be useful to anyone who is becoming a special guardian or adopter.



Order your copy of *Fostering in a Digital World: a common sense guide* today:
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www.fosteringresources.co.uk



fostering in a digital world

what you can do...

Downloading and file sharing

Have a go yourself to see how you know how downloading works.

Talk with your fostered child or young person about downloading habits and files, whether it's from sites where you would not expect to find such content across inappropriate content.

Encourage your fostered child or young person to download content only from Play Protect or NetScout. This could form part of your digital family agreement. It doesn't always have to cost money. Use websites such as where music and books were young people to listen to their music and learn about forthcoming concerts and albums. To find them, search for a favourite musician, group or record label. YouTube is another good place to explore.

Check the website's policy of online services and that all tracks are checked for containing explicit lyrics before they are downloaded.

Chat about the legal implications of downloading. Copyright is not anonymous – a copyright owner could get a court order to identify users who infringe copyright.

Ask your fostered child or young person to show you how they use a computer to select their music. Are they using P2P software? Talk about copyright and the possible repercussions if it is not adhered to.

Ensure that your computer is protected with checkers and that a firewall software is installed.

Get passwords to prevent unauthorised access to your devices.

Make sure you know what's on your computer and that you know who put it there. Check out anything suspicious on the website www.cred.co.uk

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what you can do...

Avoiding malware

- Being careful of using icons that contain a computer icon
- Do not open on instant messages
- Do not click on links in emails
- Set your virus checker to update regularly
- Make regular backups of your data
- Make regular backups of your data

Fostering in a digital world

Effects of cyber-bullying

Victims of cyber-bullying are likely to suffer emotional distress including low self-esteem, fear, frustration, anger or depression. In extreme cases, it could lead to self-harm and even suicide.

One of the most damaging effects is that a bullying victim begins to avoid the bully themselves, the punishment can range from being excluded from membership of clubs and activities to legal prosecution as well as suffering long term damage to their reputation.

On top of this, when internet technology is abused, or used to harass or threaten others, there may be legal consequences. There are four UK statute laws and one Scottish common law that are relevant to the use of IT in relation to bullying. These are: The Protection from Harassment Act 1997, The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, The Malicious Communications Act 1988, The Communications Act 2003 and Breach of the Peace (Scottish common law). All organisations, including schools, are covered by the laws stated above. If an offence takes place in school it is still an offence.

Consider the following approaches if find your fostered child is being cyber-bullied

If you believe your fostered child is a victim of cyber-bullying, discuss it with them but do it in such a way that they feel your total support. Reassure them that cyber-bullying will not be tolerated. Your fostered child must feel that they can get involved in a rational and logical manner and not make the situation worse.

Decide a plan of action with your

fostering in a digital world

Risks to mental health and physical wellbeing

fostered child or young person, involving them in the discussion of how to tackle the problem, is vital that they feel involved, and feel an element of control. Steps could include:

- Asking your fostered child or young person to show you any inappropriate messages or posts they have received. Print out a screenshot grab or save the evidence to a file for future reference. This is especially important if the child's school or other authorities need to be involved.
- Closing down your fostered child or young person's accounts on social networks, if the cyber-bullying has been going on for some time.
- Blocking the bully from getting in touch via email and other forms of messaging if the bully does find a way of digitally contacting your fostered child or young person, instruct them not to respond. What a bully most wants is a reaction.
- Talking to the child or young person's social worker to agree an appropriate strategy to deal with the issue, including support to the child or young person themselves.
- Talking to the assigned teacher or other staff at your fostered child or young person's school if follow-up is involved. Schools are very aware of cyber-bullying and will have robust anti-bullying policies in place.
- If the cyber-bullying continues or gets worse, or if other parents aren't willing to help, then discuss with the child or young person's social worker whether or not the police should be contacted.

Supporting a child who is being cyber-bullied

We're going to get you tomorrow at school, you are safe and ugly with no friends!

No-one is going to touch you because you stink. You need to get some friends because you have none!

These are just two of the posts that 12-year-old Gemma found on her Facebook profile. Up until this point, although she had been bullied at school, Gemma had felt safe at home with her foster carers, Jenny and Anne. The bullying had started in school with taunts and shoves in the corridor but then she had got access to her Facebook page. As an under-13 year-old she had been using Facebook without her foster carers' knowledge, but now she was so scared that she didn't care whether they knew or not.

Gemma called Jenny to talk a look at her Facebook page. Jenny was careful not to tell Gemma off and instead offered her full support. He reassured her that despite not telling him about the Facebook account, he would not 'spate' her for cyber-bullying.

Jenny decided on a plan of action to tackle the cyber-bullying and assured that Gemma was fully involved in the discussions about what to do. To her it was important that she felt in control of what was happening.

It was decided that:

- Gemma would show Jenny all the inappropriate messages or posts she had received. He created a screenshot grab of the Facebook pages and printing off the evidence as well as saving them to a file for future reference. He knew that this was especially important if Gemma's school was to be involved in tackling the problem.
- With Jenny's help, Gemma closed down her Facebook account. She blocked the bullies on email and other forms of messaging that she used including her mobile phone. Jenny told her that if any of the girls found a way of contacting her she was to ignore them and not get them the satisfaction of reacting.
- Jenny was relieved that he had kept up to date with Facebook technology and was glad of the advice given by his daughter Becky. He made a note to ask for more training from his fostering service. He also realised that he needed to introduce a Digital Family Agreement and talk more to the family about keeping safe online.
- Jenny and Anne asked Gemma's social worker to call in the next day to agree an appropriate strategy to deal with the issue, including support for Gemma. The social worker agreed to contact Facebook to advise them about the cyber-bullying.
- Jenny decided that if the cyber-bullying girls' parents weren't willing to help, he would discuss with Gemma's social worker whether or not the police should be contacted. He knew that this might be necessary if physical threats are involved, or if the law had been broken.
- The next day Jenny discreetly visited the school and talked to Gemma's designated teacher. He was pleasantly surprised to find that they were very aware and up to date about cyber-bullying in policies. The girls were excluded from school and Gemma was offered support and counselling from the school.
- The problem was dealt satisfactorily but Jenny and Anne knew that there was a lot more they could do to help Gemma, and the other children who lived with them to manage the digital world. It was something that they planned to discuss at their next review and foster carer support group meeting.

case study