

Inspection Top Tips

Concerns over Safe Communication

January 2026



Children's Homes Regulations

“**(5)** If the registered person considers it to be necessary for the purpose of safeguarding or promoting the welfare of a child, the registered person may impose conditions, prohibitions or restrictions upon a child's -

- (a) contact with parents, friends or relatives; or
- (b) access to communications under paragraph (3).

(6) No measure may be imposed by the registered person under paragraph (5) unless -

- (a) the child's placing authority consents to the imposition of the measure; or
 - (b) the measure is imposed in an emergency, and full details are given to the placing authority within 24 hours of its imposition.
- ”

Regulation 5 & 6

Children's Homes Guide

11.16 There may be circumstances where children's homes staff assess that restriction of contact is necessary in the interests of the child, to safeguard them or promote their welfare. This decision should not be taken lightly and must be agreed with the placing authority, where possible, except in an emergency situation, where the placing authority must be notified within 24 hours. (See regulation 22 (5) and (6)).

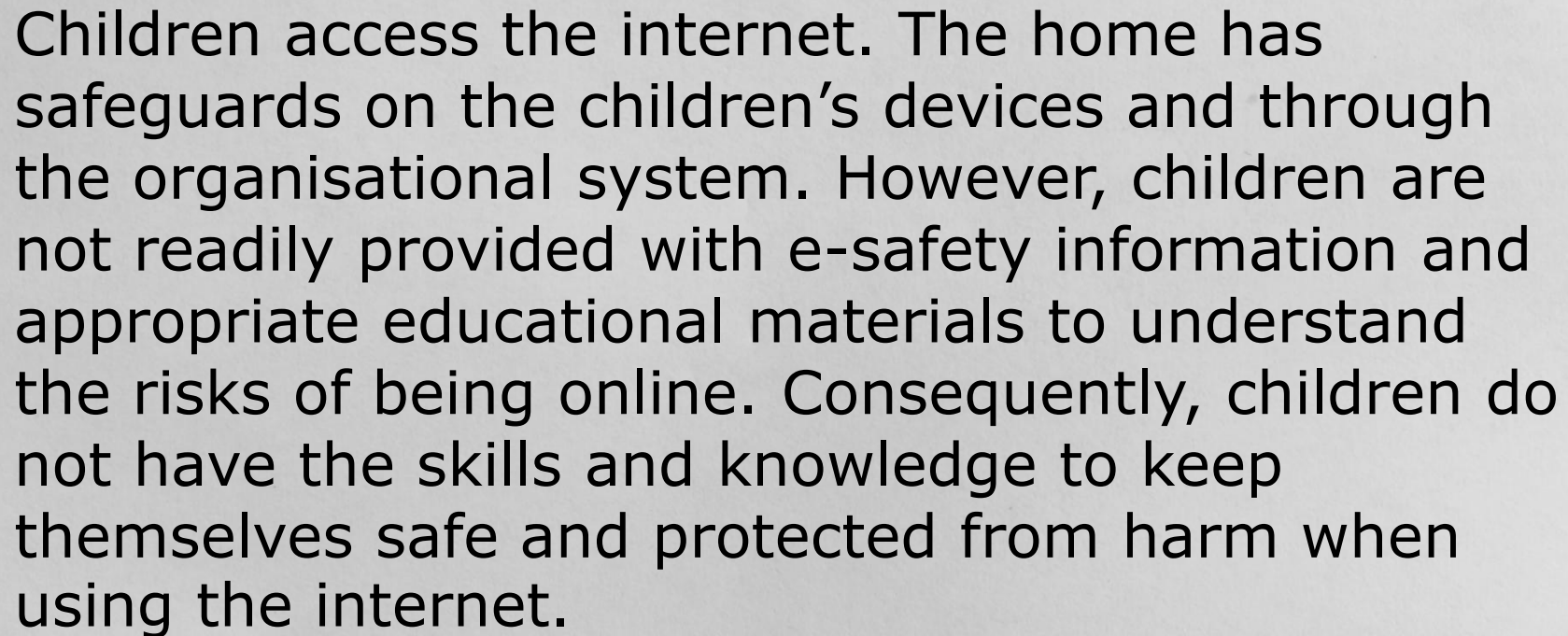


Children's Homes SCCIF Key Elements

- Children have appropriate, carefully assessed, supported contact (direct and/or indirect) with their family, friends and other people who are important to them, such as previous carers.
- There are no unnecessary restrictions in place.
- Staff work proactively and positively with parents and former carers to promote meaningful and safe contact and continuity of care, where appropriate.
- Children feel protected and are protected from harm, including from neglect, abuse, sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, accidents, self-harm, bullying and radicalisation.




Ofsted comment from inspection – Requires Improvement

A piece of white paper with deckled edges is centered on a dark gray background. The paper contains a paragraph of text in a black, sans-serif font.

Children access the internet. The home has safeguards on the children's devices and through the organisational system. However, children are not readily provided with e-safety information and appropriate educational materials to understand the risks of being online. Consequently, children do not have the skills and knowledge to keep themselves safe and protected from harm when using the internet.

Top Tips...

1. **Use of social media can be positive for children if they are supported to use it safely** - ensure there is a comprehensive training program to support the team to keep up with the rapid developments in this area.
 2. **Ensure staff know what current apps are likely to be of concern** if seen on a child's phone as there are an increasing number of platforms that can be accessed where communications are hard to oversee.
 3. **Use of emoji's in messages can have hidden meanings**, keep an updated glossary of current alternative meanings that appear in children's messages.
 4. **While there is a requirement for children to have private access to contact families, friends and key people such as social workers or PA's, contact the social worker for the child immediately if there is a safeguarding concern that may impact on who children can communicate with safely.**
- 

Questions to consider...

- Are the staff team aware of the current apps that are used to facilitate communication online?
- Does the team have an understanding of the alternative meaning of emoji's that are commonly used in messaging?
- Is there a robust policy on managing communication that incorporates the options available to the registered manager where there are clear safeguarding concerns?
- Do the keywork sessions with the child explore the positive use of social media tools by a staff team who are sufficiently informed about this rapidly developing area?
- To what degree is the development of AI being considered around the risk and impact on children?

