![Staffordshire County Council]

Children and young people's use of the internet: Advice for Special Guardian's

Many children and young people encounter negative experiences in childhood. These experiences such as loss, grief and disrupted family lives can make them more vulnerable to risk both online and in the real world.

In the online world, they may be additionally vulnerable to the range of risks that all children and young people face. Children subject to Special Guardianship Orders also face the possibility of contact from their birth family. This can pose additional risks. Some children also actively search for their birth relatives in secret; where they are successful, this can place them in risky situations.

As a special guardian, it is important that you:

Take an interest in the child's online life.

Use the internet as a family. Discuss their favourite sites and the "friends" they have in these spaces.

Talk to them about what they would do if they did hear from a member of their birth family online.

If the situation does arise having a plan in place means they will be more likely to come to you for support.

Recognise that they may be curious about their past and the people in it. This is a good reason always to inform them as much as you can in an age appropriate way about their past 'life story'.

Let them know that you understand their curiosity and that it's ok to talk about it with you. Emphasise that you won't be upset or angry.

Ask them to set privacy settings on the sites they use online.

This will ensure that they have more control over their personal information and who can gain access to it. Do the same on the sites you use and be careful what information you and the rest of the family post about the young person.

We're pleased to announce that Childnet, partners in the UK Safer Internet Centre, have worked together with Islington Council to create leaflets for foster carers and adoptive parents. Much of the advice also relates to Special Guardians as well.

The leaflets, which are free to download and easy to print, include top tips and conversation starters to help you get to grips with internet safety.

SaferInternet.org.uk