

P-04-630 Facebook Regulations for Looked After Children – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 14.10.15

Facebook Regulations for Looked After Children

Response to letters from Children's Commissioner dated 23 September 2015 and from Children in Wales dated 29 September 2015

I note that the Children's Commissioner has

- In her response to the Tranche 2 consultation on the regulations and code of practice in relation to Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 called for a revision of the IRO Guidance in Wales.
- That concerns relating to social media be discussed as part of the Statutory Review
- That carers should reinforce safety guidelines such as age restrictions on signing up for Facebook accounts and age restrictions on gaming

I note the comments by Children in Wales that young people have told them that online safety and bullying are one of their key concerns

Google search results

- The number of children groomed is unknown
- Bullying can lead to anxiety, depression and even suicide. 20% of children cyberbullied think about suicide, and 1 in 10 attempt it

NSPCC – There are no official statistics on the number of children who are bullied. But from research studies and from what children tell us, we know that bullying is an issue that affects almost all children in some way. There were almost 26,000 counselling sessions with children about bullying last year

- Education – Anxiety, depression will have an effect on education and affect grades.

Children who spend too much time on social media fail to complete homework on time or to the standard required. Lack of concentration results in poorer grades.

In July 2015 my complaint was partially upheld. The Independent Investigating Officer's report stated that "Whilst this investigation found that there is evidence that the matter of inappropriate internet use was addressed by the social workers when it became known to them, it also recognises that the Complainant appears to have been the person drawing the Local Authority's attention to these matters. Whether without the Complainant's influence these issues would have been picked up is speculative.

A more detailed record on file of the specific issues addressed with the Carers and child together with any action taken would have been helpful to this investigation."

In light of the comments by Children in Wales, Google search results and comments made by the IIO I would asked that in order to better inform that reporting provisions be made to the Welsh Government to include details of issues addressed and action taken

Issues relating to training and the cost of implementing that training will mean that this will not be an easy fix but believe that local authorities as corporate parents and independent fostering agencies should have policies in place to protect vulnerable children and to this end that the Panel's decision should be circulated to local authorities and independent fostering agencies.

Christine Williams
14 October 2015