

Acceptable Use of the Internet Policy

The Internet

The Internet is a network of many thousands of computers all over the world and millions of individual users. This world-wide network is not governed by any one body. This means that there are no limits or checks on the kind of information that is maintained by, and accessible to, Internet users. The educational value of appropriate information on the Internet is considerable. However, because the Internet is composed of information from a vast array of sources world-wide, it includes some material that is not of educational value in the context of our Centre's Youth and Community Learning Projects. This material includes information which may be inaccurate, abusive, profane, sectarian, discriminatory, sexually orientated, racist or illegal. In order to guard young people from any inherent dangers, it is the joint responsibility of Upper Andersonstown Community Forum management, staff, volunteers and parents or guardians to educate each young person at the Centre about his or her responsibility when using the Internet.

Young Persons' Access to the Internet

The Centre encourages use by our young people of the rich information resources available on the Internet, together with the development of the skills to use such resources. These skills will be necessary in the society our young people will be growing up in.

The Forum expects that staff and volunteers working within our projects will begin to investigate possibilities and use these resources as appropriate within our children and Youth projects and that staff and volunteers will provide guidance and instruction to our young people in the appropriate use of such resources. The ICT Co-ordinator and ICT staff will offer advice on content, training and appropriate teaching levels, consistent with the Centre's Children and Youth ICT programmes of study.

Independent use of telecommunications and electronic information resources by young people at the Centre is not advised and access to our computer suite will only be available when sessions can be supervised by ICT staff and at least one responsible volunteer. Access will only be permitted upon submission of permission and agreement forms by parents of young persons and by young persons themselves.

Access to on-line resources will enable young persons to explore, under strict supervision, thousands of libraries, databases and bulletin boards while exchanging messages by e-mail with people throughout the world. The Centre believes that the benefits to young persons from access to information resources and increased opportunities for learning exceed the disadvantages.

But ultimately, parents and guardians of young people are responsible for setting and conveying the standards that their children should follow when using media and information sources. To that end, the Centre supports and respects each family's right to decide whether or not to apply for Internet access.

Examples of Acceptable and Unacceptable Use

A. On-line activities, which are encouraged at our Centre, include, for example:

- The use of e-mail and computer conferencing for communication between colleagues, between young person(s) and teacher(s), between the young person(s) and young person(s) at other youth projects, between young person and industry when related to school or youth projects;
- Use of the Internet to investigate and research school subjects, themes and topics related to social and personal development;
- Use of the Internet to investigate careers and Further and Higher education,
- The development of young persons' competence in ICT skills and their general research skills.

B. On-line activities, which are not permitted, include for example:

- searching, viewing and/or retrieving materials that are not related to the aims of the school curriculum or project work set by ICT staff or to future careers;
- copying, saving and/or redistributing copyright protected material, without approval;
- subscribing to any services or ordering any goods or services, unless specifically approved by the Centre;
- playing computer games unless specifically permitted by the ICT staff;
- using 'chat' rooms or sites,
- using the network in such a way that use of the network by other users is disrupted (for example: downloading large files during peak usage times; sending mass e-mail messages);
- publishing, sharing or distributing any personal information about a user (such as: home address; e-mail address; phone number, etc);
- any activity that violates the Centre rules.

Guidelines for Young persons

No Internet user is allowed to:

- retrieve, send, copy or display offensive messages or pictures;
- use chatrooms;
- use obscene, sectarian, or racist language; harass, insult or attack others;
- damage computers, computer systems or computer networks;

- violate copyright laws;
- use another user's password;
- trespass in another user's folders, work or files;
- intentionally waste or destroy resources (such as floppy disks, paper and ink);
- use the network for unapproved commercial purposes.

Young persons breaking any of the above rules will be subject to the disciplinary procedures of the Centre.

Guidelines for Staff and Volunteers

- a) Internet access for young persons in the Centre should be available only on computers downstairs in Computer Room 2. Centre machines, which are connected to the Internet, should be in full view of supervisor and volunteers circulating in the room.
- b) While using the Internet at Centre, young persons will be supervised. In all cases, young persons should be reminded of their responsibility to use the resources in line with the Centre policy on acceptable use.
- c) The After-school supervisor, Youth Leader and ICT staff should ensure that all young persons understand how they are to use the Internet appropriately and why the rules exist.
- d) The ICT Co-ordinator and ICT staff will review files and communications to maintain system integrity and ensure that users are using the system responsibly.

Guidelines for Parents

- a) While in the Centre, staff and volunteers will guide young persons toward appropriate materials on the Internet. Outside the Centre, parents or guardians bear the same responsibility for such guidance as they would normally exercise with information sources such as television, telephones, movies, radio and other media.
- b) Appropriate home use of the Internet by children can be educationally beneficial, and can make a useful contribution to home and school work. It should, however, be supervised, and parents should be aware that they are responsible for their children's use of Internet resources at home.
- c) Parents should discuss with their children the rules for using the Internet and decide together when, how long, and what comprises appropriate use.
- d) Parents should get to know the sites their children visit, and talk to them about what they are learning.
- e) Parents should ensure that their children do not give out personal identifying information in any electronic communication on the Internet, such as a picture, an address, a phone number, the Youth Centre name, or financial information such as parent's credit card

or bank details. In this way they can protect their children (and themselves) from unwanted or unacceptable overtures from strangers, from unplanned expenditure and from fraud.

- f)** Parents should encourage their children not to respond to any unwelcome, unpleasant or abusive messages, and to tell them if they receive any such messages or images. If the message comes from an Internet service connection provided by the Centre, they should immediately inform the staff responsible for Internet sessions at the Centre.