Local procedure template for the safe use of digital technologies and online environments

Background

This template was developed to support compliance with the Education and Care Services National Regulations (National Regulations) including regulation 168 which require an education and care service to have policies and procedures for the safe use of digital technologies and online environments, including the use of mobile devices.

The local procedure that is developed must be consistent with and read together with the department's Safe use of digital technologies and online environments policy which is aligned with the National Model Code and Guidelines.

Completing this template

To comply with regulation 168 of the National Regulations, the Department for Education requires early childhood education and care services and programs to develop a local procedure in consultation with staff from the service, parents of children attending the service and children (if applicable).

Your local procedure is to be tailored to your specific context reflecting the services and programs that operate on your site.

Darlington Children's Centre Safe use of digital technologies and online environments procedure

Purpose

This procedure details how we meet our commitment to child safe practices for digital technologies and online environments.

Background

Government of South Australia
Department for Education

This procedure addresses the requirements in regulation 168 which require an education and care service to have policies and procedures for the safe use of digital technologies and online environments, including the use of mobile devices.

Children and young people have a right to safety and protection at all times, including when being photographed or filmed and when accessing digital devices and technologies at Darlington Children's Centre.

This procedure is part of the department's obligations and commitment to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children and builds on the responsibilities and obligations of individuals and early childhood education and care (ECEC) services and programs outlined in the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.

A copy of this procedure will be kept in the purple policy folder in the kindergarten.

Legislative requirement

In relation to the safe use of digital technologies and online environments, the National Regulations requires services to have policies and procedures for the safe use of digital technologies and online environments (regulation 168).

This procedure outlines how Darlington Children's Centre will implement the Safe use of digital technologies and online environments policy.

Procedures

Your procedure needs to be clear, specific and accessible to staff and families and available for inspection. Site leaders are encouraged to add site specific contextual information to the procedure where required and delete sections which are not applicable.

This procedure must be consistent with the Safe use of digital technologies and online environments policy.

For school-based preschools please ensure that the procedure, where applicable, extends to all staff and volunteers in the preschool who work directly with or are responsible for preschool aged children in ECEC services or programs.

For clarity, this does not extend to school staff whose are not working directly with or responsible for preschool children outside of the approved premises, for example:

- staff member in the library who is not working directly with preschool children
- teacher on yard duty, when a preschool educator has responsibility for the preschool children
- staff member at assembly who is not responsible for the preschool children.

Electronic devices

Personal electronic devices that can take images of children

Employees and volunteers (including work experience students) working with and/or providing a service to children at this service are not permitted to have a personal electronic device in their possession that can take images when:

- they are working directly with children
- they are in a space or spaces that are primarily used for children's programs or services when children are in attendance.

For community side staff (Director, Administration, Speech Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, DFE staff including Learning Together playgroups)

On arrival, will be expected to sign in at the front desk and sign that:

- I am not permitted to take images or videos of children. I understand that I need to seek approval before taking images at the site

Personal electronic devices will be stored in:

- personal bags in the staff room lockers
- personal bags or desk drawers in the shared office
- personal bag or in the admin draws in the front office

Smart watches can be worn if they do not have the capacity to take images or videos.

For Department for Education staff in the community building- Department devices can be used when required as part of typical work. Some examples of where a DFE device maybe used for the community side may include:

- front administration sending a text about bookings on the Department device
- OT & Speech Pathologist contacting families about meeting
- speech path or OT creating a visual board or social story
- learning together staff messaging families
- taking photos of learning environments with no children visible

Any photos taken of children would require a written consent from the parent/guardian and all images to be deleted after they have been used. No images can be stored on personal USB/portable hard drives.

For Non DFE staff e.g. CAFHS, Inklings, external facilitators of programs, non DFE allied health visiting children e.g. physio, speech path, externally run playgroups like playgroup SA

On arrival, will be expected to sign in at the front desk and sign that:

- I am not permitted to take images or videos of children. I understand that I need to seek approval before taking images at the site.

Visiting allied health non DFE for preschool/occasional care children like speech pathologist, OT, Physiotherapist will:

- Leave bag with personal electronic devices in the kindergarten staffroom whilst completing the individualised program with the child
- Work within the general kindergarten environment e.g. at the playdough table or be in a space where there is a line of sight e.g. the block space, occasional care space. Whilst children are in a Department for Education Program, they are in the care of our educators.

This information will be included in the licencing agreement to be signed off before the commencement of any allied health programs for individual children. Allied health staff can never be alone without line of sight e.g. cannot come and use a consult room one to one with a child.

Playgroup SA playgroups will:

- Use only Playgroup SA issued devices within the playgroup space
- Obtain written consent from families to take images and ensure these are stored and deleted in accordance with Playgroup SA procedures.

Personal belongings can be stored in a locker in the staff room.

The Inklings Program helps children learn and develop by working closely with their families. One way it does this is by making videos of families interacting with their children. These videos are used to show families what they are doing well and how they can support their child's learning every day. It's a way to celebrate the family's strengths and work together on ways to help their child grow and learn.

Inkling practitioners will:

- Obtain written consent from families to record videos of child-parent interactions and ensure these are stored and deleted in accordance with the Inklings program procedures.
- Use only Department of Health-issued devices (such as laptops, tablets, and phones) for work with families.
- Store personal devices either in a locker in the staff room, the locked cupboard in the consult room 1 or in their personal bag ensuring they are not used while interacting with children and families.

At Darlington Children's Centre, we collaborate with the Child and Family Health Service (CAFHS) to support the health and wellbeing of children in our care. Routine health and development checks are an essential part of ensuring every child's growth and learning journey. Educators from the kindergarten space will not take a child across to these health checks. Parents or caregivers attend these appointments with their child to ensure all health and developmental aspects are addressed appropriately.

CAFHS nurses will:

- Use only Department of Health-issued devices (such as laptops, tablets, and phones) for work with families.
- Store personal devices either in a locker in the staff room, the locked cupboard in the consult room 1 or in their personal bag ensuring they are not used while interacting with children and families.

For contractors /maintenance:

All contractors for maintenance will need to sign and state that:

- I understand that I am not permitted to take images or videos of children. I understand that I need to seek approval before taking images at the site such as an image of an infrastructure issue.

The above statement is also part of the contractor's induction statement which is revised every 3 years.

For Education staff in the kindergarten and occasional care building (including TRT and relief ECW's, Volunteers and students)

Personal electronic devices will be stored in:

- Personal bags/backpacks in the locked staff office in the kindergarten space. There are also lockers available to store bags and personal affects.

The door to the staff office will remain locked when on one is present. When educators are using their phones in the staff office- the door will remain closed.

Staff and volunteers can use their personal electronic device before the children have started and after the children have left and on designed lunch breaks in a space not used for children's programs or services. The spaces phone can be used include:

- staff office in the kindergarten space
- staff room in the community space.
- shared office in community space
- consult rooms in the community space (when not in use)
- outside at the table and chairs when on lunch breaks (at the staff only entrance of the Kindy/occasional care space)

The kindergarten kitchen is not a space where phones can be used as this is visible for children.

Smart watches or any other device that does not have the capability to take images or videos can be worn at the service. The site leader will ask each individual if their watch has the capacity to take phones without the phone being present.

There are limited exceptional circumstances where an employee or volunteer may seek approval in writing from the site leader to be in possession of a personal electronic device which can take images or video including health needs, disability or urgent pressing necessity.

Where a staff member or a volunteer believes their circumstances constitute exceptional circumstances, they can complete the Exemption request – on site possession of a personal electronic device application form for consideration by the site leader. If approval is granted it will be for the stated essential purpose only and the personal electronic device must not be used for other purposes.

Exceptional circumstances applications will be considered on a case by case basis and the criteria for any approval will be consistent with the Safe use of digital technologies and online environments policy and the National Model Code and Guidelines.

In emergency circumstances such as a child is lost or missing or the site is in lockdown the site leader may give one off approval for educators to use their personal electronic devices. All approvals and details of the device will be recorded on the essential once-off approvals register after the event.

For regular outings (excursion/ walks to the school/community walks) the site leader may approve a staff member or volunteer to have their personal device in their possession for child safety or emergency purposes. The site leader will record this approval and details of the device on the essential planned approvals register. No images or videos of children may be taken on personal devices, and the device can only be used for the approved purpose. The site does have 2 x mobile phones which should be the first phones taken in all instances.

Where staff or volunteers provide emergency contact details such as their child's school, staff and volunteers are encouraged to share Darlington Children's Centre landline.

Parents will be discouraged from using their personal electronic devices when in attendance at the service. This information will be communicated to parents in the induction booklet, at the preschool/occasional care information session and before events such as end-of-year celebrations. A personal device free area poster will be displayed in the kindergarten. Occasional care and playgroup spaces to alert parents and visitors of the ban on taking photos or videos of children.

Service issued devices

At our service, only service issued devices are to be used to take and access images and videos of children. All educators who need digital devices in the course of their work will be provided with access to a shared device or a service issued device at the discretion of the site director. To utilise a shared Windows device, staff members must log in using their EdPass user account or local domain account (for school-based preschools). For shared iPads, staff members must sign in and out of the necessary applications as needed.

All staff must read and understand the Department for Education's ICT cyber security standard and sign the ICT Acceptable Use Agreement declaration and complete PLINK Cyber Security Training Course before using service issued devices.

Service issued devices which are used by staff and volunteers for taking, sharing or storing images or videos

of children and/or used in programs with children must not be used for personal use.

Images and videos of children

Consent from parents to take, use and store images and videos of children

We will obtain parental consent before taking, using, distributing or storing images and videos of their children.

At the time of enrolment parents will be asked to complete the consent to publish media and creative work of children, students and the community. The consent forms will be stored with the child's enrolment record in accordance with the department's Information and records management requirements .

If parent permission is revoked, every effort will be made to remove relevant media from distribution, however this may not be possible or practical in some situations.

Taking Images and videos of children

We believe:

- electronic devices are a useful educational tool to document children's learning
- digital images and videos play an important role in engaging parents in their child's education and care experiences
- Electronic devices also allow children to document their thinking and learning and to revisit past events such as excursions.
- They are especially important for children who need additional support with their communication and inclusion within the learning environment (e.g. AAC devices)

We will:

- only take images or videos on service issued devices
- seek children's consent before taking images or videos
- ensure children's privacy, dignity and rights are respected
- where possible another educator or staff member will be present when images are taken.
- continue to critically reflect on our use of digital images to ensure that images or videos relate directly to children's learning, development and wellbeing.
- be intentional in our approaches to documentation of children's learning.
- ensure we prioritise active supervision, interactions and engagement with children in their learning.
- Not take any iPads into the bathroom areas even if this is for a child who needs support with AAC

Parents of children enrolled in our service and programs will be discouraged from using their personal electronic device while at the service, noting they will not be prohibited from taking an image of their own child, but must not take images of other children, including where their child is part of a group.

Staff will communicate to parents the importance of child-safe environments and explain how the service is implementing the newly introduced regulations to enhance child safety.

If a parent takes images of children, other than their own, we will request that they stop taking images and delete any taken images. If the request is ignored, or the parent becomes offensive or abusive the site leader will lodge a critical incident report. If required we will contact Conditions for Learning directorate if urgent assistance is required.

Before being granted access to the service visitors, including maintenance contractors, will be asked to agree, as a condition of entry, that they will not take images or videos of children by completing the visitor sign in register.

Visitors including maintenance, contractors may, with the site leader's or delegates permission, take images for approved purposes, such as taking images of site infrastructure to obtain a quote.

Work experience students and volunteers must not take images and videos of children. Where images are required as part of a practicum, additional consent will be obtained from the parent and approval sought from the site leader. Images will be taken on a service issued device by a staff member and the student provided a hard copy of the image.

Inappropriate images and videos of children

Our service will take active steps to ensure the safety, dignity and the rights of a child are respected when taking images or videos and not take any inappropriate images or videos of children. Refer to Safe use of digital technologies and online environments policy for more information.

Educators and volunteers must not take or use service issued devices in children's bathrooms or nappy changing areas.

Parents will be discouraged from sending inappropriate digital images of their child to the service, for example photos of a child's nappy rash. This information will be communicated by face to face conversations and at the induction visits.

Using images and videos of children

We print off images to share with families with parental consent.

We use images to:

- create identity and belonging through photo displays of individuals and groups of children
- identify children with additional support, health or medical requirements
- document and share children's learning
- inform and support assessment and reporting
- communicate with families about their child's participation in the learning program

Staff will only distribute messages and content to parents using service issued devices and only to parents of children currently attending the service, who have given required consent.

Storing images of children

In accordance with the Safe use of digital technologies and online environments policy we will only download, access, share or store images or videos using service issued devices on platforms supported and approved by the department, such as Frog, cloud storage or the sites network in accordance with the ICT cyber security standard.

We ensure that all department official records are regularly backed up on the one drive network which are approved by the department for the storage of information.

All records will be stored in accordance with the Identifying, creating and managing official records webpage and the Information and records management for schools and preschools procedure.

Staff will not use personal storage and file transfer media such as SD cards, USB drives, hard drives or cloud storage to save or store images or have them in their possession while working directly with children.

Destruction of images

All digital records at our site, from creation to disposal, will be managed in accordance with the School and preschool official records webpage and the Information and records management for schools and preschools procedure.

For additional security reasons an identified staff member will be responsible for transferring children's images and videos from portable digital devices (e.g. Ipad) to the sites record management systems on Teams on fortnightly basis.

The site leader is responsible for ensuring that all records are archived or disposed of securely in accordance with the Operational Records Disposal Schedule at the end of each preschool year.

Digital devices used by children

Our service believes the use of digital technology sits within a broader learning environment that is play based, where children's learning is dynamic and holistic and where children are active participants in their learning.

Early Childhood Australia's statement on young children and digital technologies guides our reflection on children's use of digital technologies including considering how digital technologies enhances children's:

- relationships with others
- health and wellbeing
- citizenship and online privacy
- learning through play and intentionality.

We also refer to selecting and using resources for educational purposes guideline for considerations about the appropriateness of children's use of digital resources within the preschool program.

Educators will limit children's screen time in line with Australian Government physical activity guidelines by age, which set out recommendations for the maximum amount of screen time for children.

Physical Activity Guidelines

Age of child	Recommended screen time
birth to 24 months	No screen time
24 months to 5 years	Less than one hour a day
5 – 12 years	For entertainment no more than 2 hours a day.

When children are accessing digital technologies and online environments educators will ensure:

- digital devices are integrated as part of the learning program
- programs and software children can access and use are age appropriate
- they vet children's use of social media platforms carefully to avoid inappropriate content, including YouTube
- all new apps and games are checked for age and developmentally appropriate content before they are used
- children only access digital technologies in shared spaces and are actively supervised at all times
- where possible they remain in line of sight of other staff members when working with children
- they model the safe use of digital technologies and online environments
- screen time is strictly limited
- they model appropriate use of the internet and software programs
- children are encouraged to use their protective behaviour strategies when feeling unsafe, for example tell a staff member or a trusted adults if they encounter anything that makes them feel uncomfortable, scared or upset

Educators will not:

- provide unrestricted and unsupervised access to the internet and digital devices
- upload personal child information or images and video to AI tools except EdChat
- upload images or video of children to EdChat on personal devices
- use digital devices as a strategy to manage children's energy, engagement or behaviour
- use digital devices in response to weather conditions
- use free apps that pose risks to pop up advertisement and inappropriate content
- place digital devices in areas where educators cannot monitor their use
- pose risks to children's physical health and wellbeing through overuse, strain or eye glare

Children bringing personal electronic devices from home

Due to safety and security risks parents are requested not to bring children's digital devices from home including smart watches and air tags.

This information will be communicated to families at the time of enrolment through the parent handbook and at induction time.

The site leader may approve the use of children's digital devices from home for educational or communication purposes such as an augmented communication device (AAC) for a child with additional needs or disability. Parents will be encouraged to discuss their child's learning needs and any special considerations at the time of enrolment.

If approval is given for a child to have a digital device, approval will be recorded on the child's enrolment record and may be time limited. If approval is time limited a parent who is seeking an extension will be encouraged to make an appointment with the site leader to discuss their child's learning needs.

The site leader will check with parents to ensure appropriate parental controls and restrictions are in place on any digital device bought from home to ensure children's safety prior to it being brought to the service.

Working with parents and the community

We believe that parents are children's first and most important teachers. We will work in collaboration with parents to support and promote children's safe use of digital technologies and online environments including:

- consulting with parents, staff, Aboriginal Elders and community knowledge holders about culturally appropriate and safe content
- working with parents to ensure appropriate parental controls and restrictions are in place to ensure online safety on any approved child devices brought from home
- encouraging parents to talk to their children about online risks in an age and developmentally appropriate way (see useful resources below)
- sharing information with parents about recommended screen time limits in accordance with the Australian Government physical activity guidelines

Useful resources

Online safety support – Department for Education

how to choose good online content – eSafety Commissioner

Media & technology for preschoolers – Raising Children Network

Induction of staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers including work experience students will have current Responding to Risks of Harm, Abuse and Neglect – Education and Care (RRHAN-EC) training before commencing at the site to ensure they understand their role and responsibilities in safeguarding children. Each educator working within the Kindergarten, Occasional care and allied health team (OT /Speech path) including staff, students and volunteers will be required to undertake Foundations of child safety training and the advanced module

As part of the service induction process all staff and volunteers including work experience students will have ready access to the Safe Use of digital technologies and online environments policy and this procedure.

All staff, volunteers and work experience students will be expected to read, understand and adhere to the Safe Use of digital technologies and online environments policy and this procedure.

Staff and volunteers will be supported to access relevant training relating the safe use of digital technologies and online environments including access to relevant Plink online training.

Online Safety

Our site will implement the Responding to online safety incidents in South Australian schools guideline in response to any incidents of inappropriate or risky online behaviour by children or adult behaviour targeted at children.

For online safety incidents that involve allegations of staff member misconduct our educators will be guided by the following documents:

- Protective practices for education and care staff and volunteers
- Responding to online safety incidents in South Australian schools guideline
- Child protection policies and guidelines

The site leader will also report any incidents on the department's incident management system in accordance with the Reporting critical incidents, injuries, hazards and near misses procedure.

Use of AI and emerging technologies

Educators at our site are encouraged to use EdChat, the department's secure generative artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot as the preferred tool due to its additional safety features. Due to its additional security controls staff can enter personal or identifying information about children or the site such as images, videos, names, addresses, or health information.

If educators are using EdChat on a personal device, they are unable to upload images and videos of children.

We will adhere to the Artificial intelligence in schools – use and considerations guidelines before approving the use of any other AI tools. If alternative tools are approved, staff will not enter any personal or identifying information about the site or children. This includes uploading images or video of children.

If educators are using AI to help with programming and creating learning experiences this will not be done where children are present.

We will limit the use of AI with children to recognised programs such as those focusing on STEM or early language development. Any programs will be age-appropriate, safe and aligned with the principles, practices and learning outcomes described in the Early Years Learning Framework. Educators will ensure children will be closely supervised when accessing tools and toys with AI capability to ensure privacy and data security is maintained.

Procedure creation and revision record

Local procedures must be regularly reviewed and maintained to ensure they remain relevant and up to date with important developments in evidence-based practices on the safe use of digital technologies and online environments.

The procedure should also be reviewed and updated in response to any changes to the Safe use of digital technologies and online environments policy or following any incident or identification of risks relating the use of digital technologies and online environments.

Any revisions to the procedure should be communicated to staff and families, and access to electronic and hardcopies of older versions should be removed.

Duplicate (copy/paste) the below table to record each version change.

Version:	2
Approved by site leader:	Kim Cook
Date of approval:	13/3/2026
Date of next review:	13/32029
Amendments(s):	Nil