USE OF THE INTERNET BY YOUNG CHILDREN IN EARLY YEARS SETTINGS

RATIONALE:

The internet plays an increasingly important part in our society today. Young children may have experience of watching their parents ordering goods or services from the internet, banking online or sending e-mail. They may have seen older siblings use the internet for entertainment, such as playing games or downloading music.

There are many benefits for young children learning via the internet. It can be a useful source of information, helping staff to research a topic in response to children's interests. It offers access to a vast range of resources, many of which can be downloaded free of charge. For example, staff can download samples of music from other cultures, pictures of castles or short video**s** of minibeasts to support and enhance children's learning. The internet offers a wide variety of games at various levels, to allow for differentiation. These can offer new ways to stimulate children's interest and to motivate them towards learning.

However, there are also some potential problems, including unsuitable sites, aggressive advertising, pop up windows showing adult content and links to other sites. The internet contains vast amounts of information on virtually every subject imaginable. Just as a library has sections which appeal to different readers, not all the information on the internet may be suitable for young learners. Some of the content may be unreliable or misleading.

The policy guidelines which follow are designed to promote safe use of the internet by young children in early years settings within East Dunbartonshire.

RESOURCES

Early Learning, Forward Thinking: The ICT Strategy for Early Years, Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2004
Double Click Thinking, Scottish Executive   http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/doubleclickthinking/
The Internet and Young Children, National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998   http://www.naeyc.org/ece/1998/18.asp

CROSS REFERENCES

The Child at the Centre	6.2
National Care Standards	2.4

POLICY GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF THE INTERNET BY CHILDREN IN PRE-SCHOOL SETTINGS WITHIN EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE.

- **Permission should be obtained from parents before using the internet with their child**.

- **Staff should supervise young children's use of the internet.**
  Within East Dunbartonshire Council, access to the internet will not be provided in accounts set up for pre-school children's use of the computers. Staff should log in on their own accounts to access the network, and then log out after using the internet with the children.

- **Staff should check the content of websites before using them with young children.**
  Once a suitable site has been identified, this should be added to the Favorites list, to give quick direct access.

- **Staff should check the source of the information.**
  Even if it appears to come from a reputable source, for example a university, it is worth looking for the tilde sign ~ in the URL (shown in the address box) as this usually indicates areas of a website relating to an individual, whose views might be totally different from those held by the university.

- **Filtering software should be installed to block unsuitable content**.
  Staff should be aware that despite the best endeavours to ensure security, it may still be possible that some unsuitable content could be accessed. Any breaches of the security should be reported immediately by logging on the Help Desk, so that this can be investigated and the problem rectified.

- **Pre-school children will not have direct access to e-mail within early years settings in East Dunbartonshire Council.**
  On occasion, it may be desirable to communicate by e-mail, for example to share news with children in another early years setting. This may be carried out as a joint learning experience involving children and a member of staff, via the staff member's e-mail account.

  By taking responsibility for children's computer use, families and early childhood professionals can greatly reduce the potential associated risks, while at the same time allow children access to a multitude of positive learning experiences.
  National Association for the Education of Young Children (1998)

Dear Parent /Guardian

INTERNET PERMISSION FORM

Access to the internet is now a recognised and valued educational tool which all schools and local authority early years settings in East Dunbartonshire Council have access to. Before your child can access the internet under the supervision of a staff member, your consent is required. Please sign and return the enclosed form as evidence of your approval and acceptance of the policy guidelines on this matter.

Access to the internet will allow your child a much wider range of pre-selected resources and activities which can support and enhance their learning. This could include games, photographs, short video clips, music and other sound files. Staff may use the internet to find information in order to respond to a child's question or to help develop one of the children's interests. A filtering system has been put in place, with the best endeavour to block unsuitable content. Your child will always be supervised by a staff member who has checked the site before visiting it with your child.

It is considered that the educational benefits of internet access far exceed the disadvantages. While some material on the internet contains items which are illegal, offensive, inaccurate or morally unacceptable to some people, East Dunbartonshire Council has taken all practical steps to ensure safe use. The centre supports and respects each family's right to decide whether to apply for access or not.

Please complete the permission form which follows. If forms are not returned by the due date, we will assume that access is not being applied for and therefore will not be granted.

Further information is available from the Scottish Executive's Double Click Thinking website at http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/doubleclickthinking/

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM FOR PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO THE INTERNET

I give/do not give* my consent for my son/daughter*

_____ (insert child's full name)
to use the internet within the early years centre, accompanied by a member of staff.

Signed _____ Date _____

Relationship to Child _____

Please return this form to the early years centre by _____

* delete as appropriate