Facebook accounts

If used carefully, Facebook can be a powerful tool for communication and marketing of an early years setting.

The new Ofsted inspection framework takes notice of settings online presence and the new Ofsted guidance 'Inspecting Safeguarding in Early Years' (2015, page 16) states:

"Inspectors should ensure that they are aware of information available to the public, reported in the press or accessible on the internet, including that available on the early years setting website, if available. This may contain information related to safeguarding. Inspectors should run a check on the internet as part of their pre-inspection planning to see whether there are any safeguarding issues that may need to be followed up during inspection. All evidence that relates to planning for the inspection should be recorded".

However, as with any web publishing site, there are risks and it is vital that settings have explored the consequences of these and fully accepted them before setting up a presence online. Good e-safety practice should be fully embedded before using social media tools, including relevant training and information for practitioners, parent/carers and children. An effective online policy must also be in place. The governing body and leadership team must be aware that they have a duty of care under The Children's Act 1989 and Health and Safety at work Act 1974 to ensure the safety and well-being of children and practitioners.

Settings should consider the benefits/risks for setting up a social media account and what the purpose would be.

For example:

- to positively promote the setting to the community and also potential new parents
- to engage more with parents, particularly those hard-to-reach parents
- to get messages out in a timely manner
- to share events and announcements
- to celebrate the work of children and the setting as a whole
- to share resources, advice and guidance with parents
- to deter people from setting up unmonitored Facebook groups or pages.

If settings agree a social media account is necessary the following points should be considered:

- whether it will be a public page for promoting the setting or a closed group where parents request to be a member (or both public and closed accounts)
- who will manage the account
- who will be allowed to access the account and upload information

- how often will information be uploaded and updated

- how will the account be managed when the setting is not open (evenings and weekends)

- will the account remain active when the setting is not open for long periods of time i.e. school holidays or term time for holiday clubs

- robust policies for staff use, including code of conduct and acceptable use policy

- robust policies for managing appropriate use of the account

- robust policies for parents/carers in initial communication. Parents/carers must be aware that inappropriate comments will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in the same way as if it was face-to-face

- obligations under the Data Protection Act

- safeguarding and child protection

- responsibility to protect the reputation of the setting

- ensure that profanity filters are on high and ensure that posts and comments can be reviewed before they appear to enable you to manage the page

- who will be responsible if inappropriate comments are seen.

Child Protection
There should be nothing on the site that could lead to anyone discovering the identity of a child or where they live. This should be reflected in settings safeguarding policy or camera and image policy (if it is separate).
The provider should also be aware of parents commenting on photographs which may enable people to identify their child and other details. For example, if a parent has included personal information on their profile and has not set their privacy settings then personal information may be discoverable.
out-law Facebook pages and EU law

Facebook settings
There are three different options that settings can take when setting up a Facebook page. All options require a basic Facebook account.
1. **The setting as a standard user**
In this instance a user account is created in the name of the setting in the same way that a personal account is used. Parents would need to send a 'friend' request to the setting and if accepted they would have access to the timeline. This is not recommended as an appropriate route by Facebook. The Facebook terms and conditions state that you must use your real name when establishing a Facebook account therefore to create a setting account you would be in breach of the sites terms and conditions.
Pros
- the setting has some control who views any content
Cons
- all users would be able to see everything a parent writes, for some parents they may feel this is an invasion of privacy

- it relies on parents signing up
- how will the setting verify parents? What about other family members e.g. grandparents, aunties etc

2. The setting as a page

An existing Facebook account is used to create a 'fan page' about the setting. The content of the page is publicly available and users like the page to follow any updates or new posts. This is the Facebook-recommended route for settings wishing to have a social media presence.

Pros
- anyone can 'like' the page to follow it without giving access to their timeline
- it is searchable so parents can easily find it
- users can be blocked from viewing the page if they are causing problems

Cons
- anyone can see the page content
- anyone can like or comment on the content

3. The setting as a group

There are three types of groups available on Facebook - open, closed and secret. All groups require a Facebook account first. The recommended option would be a closed group as you can then control who sees the content.

Open: Anyone on Facebook can see and join the group. Open groups will appear in search results and all content that members post (e.g. photos, videos and files) is visible to anyone viewing the group. People may see who joins or is invited to an open group, such as in news feed or searches.

Closed: Anyone on Facebook can see the group name, its members and people invited to join the group; but only members can see posts in the group. To join a closed group, a member needs to add users, or you can ask to join. People may see when someone joins or is invited to a closed group, such as in news feed or searches.

Secret: Non-members cannot find these groups in searches or see anything about the group, including its name and member list. The name of the group will not display on the timelines of members. To join a secret group, you need to be added by a member of the group.

Pros
- the setting can control who views the content
- the setting don't have to be 'friends' with the parents as you can email them an invite
- the setting can see who has viewed each post made

Cons
- limited control over posts made by others

(Dee Kerwick-Chrisp, Yorkshire and Humber Grid for Learning September 2013)

Further information can be found in the

[Online Safety: A Toolkit for Early Years Settings](#)

[Facebook check](#)
[Facebook family safety centre](#)
[Facebook guide for educators.pdf](#)