SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP OUR YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE

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Sleepover safeguarding considerations

As your child grows, sleepovers often become a part of their social life. They're a great way for children to build friendships, practice independence and have fun in a new environment. However, while sleepovers are usually positive experiences, it's important to be mindful of the safeguarding considerations involved.

Before agreeing to a sleepover: What to consider

1. **Know the family well**
   - How well do you know the child's parents or caregivers?
   - Are you comfortable with their values and parenting style?
2. **Supervision and household dynamics**
   - Will an adult be present all evening, overnight and in the morning?
   - Who else will be in the home? Are there older children or teenagers and how will they be supervised? Will there be any visiting adults?
3. **Sleeping arrangements**
   - Where will the children sleep? In a shared room, separate rooms or communal space like a living room?
   - Are the sleeping arrangements appropriate for your child's age and comfort level?
4. **Behaviour expectations and house rules**
   - What are the rules around bedtime, snacks, screen time and general behaviour?

Technology and internet safety

1. **Access to devices**
   - Will children have access to phones, tablets or gaming consoles?
   - Are parental controls in place?
2. **Content monitoring**
   - Are there clear limits on what children can watch or play?
   - Will they be allowed to use social media, video apps (e.g., TikTok or YouTube) or messaging platforms?
3. **Digital boundaries**
   - Remind your child never to take or share pictures of themselves or others in private settings.

Remember: It's absolutely acceptable to say 'no' or 'not yet' if you're not comfortable.

Sleepovers can be great—but only when your child feels safe, you're confident in the setting and everyone is at ease.

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Device boundaries

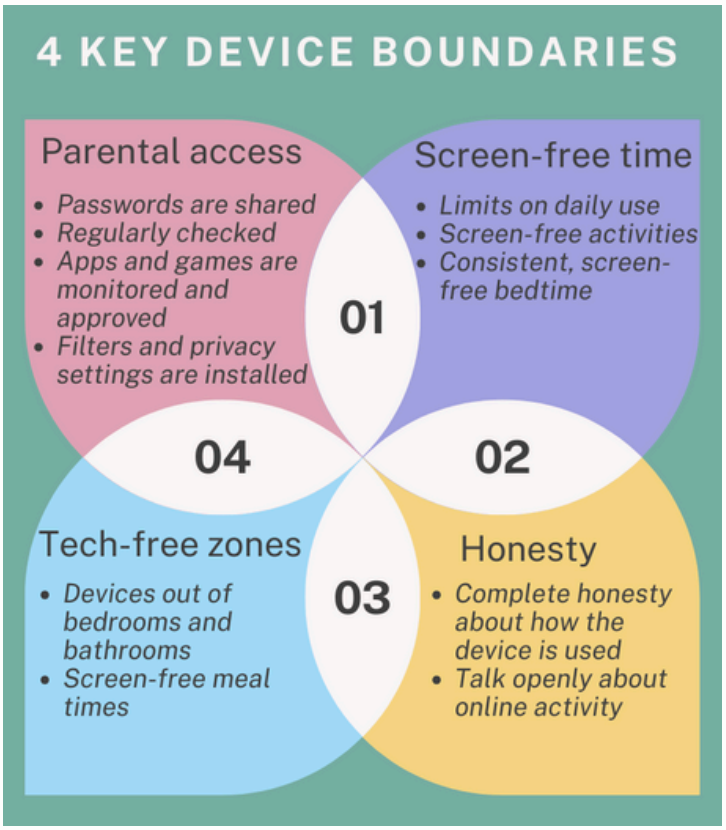
In today's digital world, devices like tablets, smartphones, and laptops are part of everyday life—even for young children. Used well, they can offer learning opportunities, creativity and connection. But without clear boundaries, children can be exposed to online risks, screen time struggles and content that isn't age-appropriate.

Why boundaries matter

Even at a young age, children are:

- **Curious and impressionable**, often unable to assess what's appropriate.
- At risk of viewing **violent, sexual or disturbing content** accidentally or through peers.
- Vulnerable to **online contact from strangers**
- Prone to **sleep disruption, anxiety and mood swings** from too much screen time.

That's why clear and consistent boundaries are essential for both safety and healthy development.



Tips for conversations at home: Building trust and understanding

Open, ongoing conversations are one of the **most powerful safeguarding tools** you have as a parent. When children feel safe talking to you about what they see and experience online, they are far less likely to be harmed by it—and much more likely to come to you for help when something goes wrong.

Explain to your child:

- That online spaces, like games and videos, aren't always made for children—even when they seem fun.
- That some people online pretend to be someone they're not and may try to trick or manipulate.
- That not all content is safe or real—boundaries help protect their brain, body, and feelings.

Try these conversation starters regularly:

- *"What are you playing/watching right now? Show me how it works?"*

This encourages sharing and lets you check the content and chat features together.

- *"Has anything ever popped up that made you feel weird or unsure?"*

Helps children recognise red flags and opens the door for them to share worries without shame.

- *"What do you do if someone you don't know sends you a message or wants to play?"*

Reinforces that they should never respond to strangers online.

- *"Why do you think we set limits on screen time and certain apps?"*

Encourage reflection and understanding that boundaries are there to protect their mental health, sleep, and safety.

- *"If a friend showed you something upsetting or made you feel uncomfortable online, what would you do?"*

Teach them it's okay to say '*no*', walk away, and always tell an adult—even if someone says, '*Don't tell.*'