

Signs of harm and creating safety in video calls

Setting up is important

For every video call. Privacy, confidentiality and safety. Be curious where the video call is taking place, who is present not only in the room, but also in the house. Be aware that even if adults are not there in person, they may psychologically be held in the mind of the child and influence what is being communicated. Scaling questions can be used to get a sense of how private children may feel.

Children show more than they tell

Are you noticing any inconsistencies or discrepancies in what they say and how they present. Are they telling you they are feeling excited, or happy but avoiding eye contact or seem flat and subdued. Be attentive to non-verbal cues and physical signs of arousal (fidgeting, tapping, picking at nails etc).

Signals

There are many ways in which children are prevented from signalling that they need help, it is however important that they are still provided with ways and means, for example a traffic light system can be introduced GREEN, *I'm OK*; AMBER, *please keep checking in*, RED *I need your help now* or use cards that you can hold up that require yes or no answers if you are particularly worried about a child's ability to talk freely e.g. is there something you want to tell me, but can't? Do you feel safe? What would you like me to do, providing options A, B, C. Professional judgement will be needed as no system for signalling is a perfect one however, they do provide a child or young person with options.

Get creative!

Make sure children and young people are provided with simple 'lock down' packs which include note pads, pens, templates (see Children's Participation Toolkit) to enable them to engage in activities that act as a window into their lives. Include telephone numbers for support services such as ChildLine, or those related to parent vulnerabilities such as (NACOA, or Alateen – parental alcohol use).

Helping Hands

Create or review the 'helping hands' visual aid to identify the people children trust or feel safe with. Make sure contact details are up to date and a hold 'helping hand' agreement meeting with the family and those identified to plan all the different ways the helping hands can be in touch with children and share any particular worries.