Guidance on the use of photos of children

collaboration

Image: Unsplash. Photographed by Michal Parzuchowski.

Introduction

Images of children and young people can play an important role in raising awareness of children's rights and needs. They can empower children and give them a voice. Images can also be powerful tools to communicate violations of children's rights. They can change how we think about conflicts, disasters, famine, violence against children, homelessness etc. and encourage public support for a call to act. More positively, they can also communicate hope, progress and successful interventions to protect children and help raise much needed funds to advance children's rights.

However, the use of images of children and young people is increasingly becoming an issue of particular concern in light of the advancement of internet technology, the rapid spread of information online and the increasing use of social media to share information, images and news.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provides for children's right to privacy, integrity and protection.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has emphasised the importance that all media respect children's right to privacy. Today, this responsibility is shared by all individuals who access, download, store or share news, information, images, photos or videos of children via news sites, social media or other online platforms.

The CBSS Child Safeguarding policy commits the CBSS to safeguard children we come in contact with through our work from actions that place them at risk of violence, abuse, exploitation, injury or any other harm.

What are the risks?

- The image may have been taken, published and/or shared without the child's knowledge and/or consent.

- The image may misrepresent the child's identity, personality, perspective, and situation and compromise their privacy and integrity.

- Each photo or video, and any comments on them, become a part of a child's public image. The image may affect them later in life. For example, it may affect their safety, how they see themselves, or how they are viewed by others, for example, when applying for a job.

- Images may be copied, downloaded, screenshotted, or shared by anyone, including for harmful purposes.

- The image may be distorted, manipulated, or used for unintended, inappropriate or even harmful purposes.

- Depending on the terms and conditions, the image may be owned by the platform once it's been posted. Platforms may then license images for use by third parties for commercial purposes, for example.

- Some children may be identified by persons who they are protected from, or become vulnerable to exploitation, grooming and trafficking if the image is shared alongside information that makes them identifiable or reveals their location. This can include, for example, personal or visual details or a tag with location information.

- Photos and videos may appear in internet search results without information about the context in which the image was taken.

What do I need to think about?

Before taking, publishing and/or sharing images of children, consider the following:

• For what purpose are you taking, publishing and/or sharing the image? Are there ways to communicate a message without an image of a child?

• Do you think it is likely that the child in the image is aware of being photographed, and has given consent to be photographed and for others to publish and/or share the image online?

• Do you have the consent of the child to be photographed, and to publish and share the photo?

• Is the image sensationalist, inappropriate, exploitative or revealing, especially in cases where there is a high risk of vulnerability?

• Is there a risk that taking, publishing and/or sharing the image might compromise the child's rights to privacy, data protection, safety or personal integrity?

• How widely may the image be shared and used, for what purpose and by whom?

• How long may images remain available?

• Is it in the child's best interests to take, publish and/or share this image?

• How might taking, publishing and/or sharing the image affect the children's wellbeing and safety, including in the longer-term and as adults?

• Would you be comfortable taking, publishing and/or sharing, or having others do so, a similar image of yourself, your own child or a child you know?

Resources

https://archive.crin.org/en/guides/communications/media-tool-kit/ngo-communications/using-images-children-media.html

https://www.keepingchildrensafe.global/

https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/

trust

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