Online Safety Advice for Parents

What are the dangers online?

The internet is a wonderful resource enabling children and young people to connect, communicate and be creative in different ways, on a range of devices. However, they may face some risks. While this may depend on the age of the child, the UK Safer internet Centre has identified the following online risk categories to be aware of:

Behaviour: *sharing too much information*

It is critical that young people are aware of the impact they have online as well as on other people, particularly in terms of their digital footprint. They should remember to remain respectful and kind online, but also keep in mind that once something is posted online it cannot be taken back.

Sometimes, they can also feel a false sense of being safe, without understanding the importance of keeping personal information safe and not sharing this with strangers. Make sure they feel confident enough to report inappropriate conversations, messages or behaviour either to a trusted adult.

In an effort limit the spread of COVID-19, many children are now being educated at home and continuing their education online.

Although technology can give children access to learning opportunities and socialising, it can still present some risks.

We have provided some more information and things you can do to help keep your child safe online during this difficult time.

You can:

1. **Encourage your child to keep their accounts private, rather than public.**
2. **Talk to them about keeping personal information, including address, financial details and the school they attend, private.**
3. **Get them to talk to you about their social media use.**
4. **Familiarise yourself with the apps they use.**

For more guidance on how to do this, go to the 'Useful Resources for Parents' section of this document.

Contact: *strangers, bullies, groomers or radicalisers can contact children*

The internet can provide children with important social interactions, which is very important, especially during a time when they are in social isolation. If children are feeling alone during these times, they may turn to social networks to reach out to others, including people who they do not know.

If children and young people make new friends online during this period, the new online friend may not be who they say they are, which can place them at significant harms, including financial and sexual exploitation, as well as radicalisation.

Content: age-inappropriate or unreliable content or fake news

While browsing online during this period. Young people may come across content that is inappropriate, hurtful or harmful. They can come across this content through social networks, online games, blogs and websites. Try to monitor the apps being used, ensuring they are age-appropriate, as well as talking to your children about their online activity.

Many stories are being shared across social networks about COVID-19. Make sure children and young people understand the difference between fake news, an article written from bias and content from a reliable source.

Things to talk about……

1. **Talk with your children about their understanding of friends – it may be very different to your own.**
2. **Encourage your child to remove any unknown contacts.**
3. **Check that they have appropriate privacy settings on their apps.**
4. **Encourage more family time, to avoid them feeling isolated.**
5. **Consider limiting the amount of time that they are on their phone or introduce a curfew for social media usage.**

See the 'Useful Resources for Parents' section of this document, for more information and resources you can use to support your child.

To help with this, you can:

1. **Familiarise yourself with the apps that your child uses.**
2. **Monitor your child's usage.**
3. **Talk to them about things they came across whilst online.**
4. **Talk about issues that are worrying your child and get them factual information from reliable sources.**
5. **Report or block any pages that are spreading content which is upsetting or inappropriate material.**

For more guidance on how to do this, go to the 'Useful Resources for Parents' section

Extremism and Radicalisation

Extremism is where people have a hatred towards a community, based on prejudice, and use this to cause divides between us. They often use times of instability, including the current climate, to pull young people into the world of hatred for other communities and can encourage violence. This may be in the form of racist memes (pictures) or videos, found on social media sites and gaming platforms.

Conspiracy theories can also be a tool, which extremists may use to influence and manipulate young people. This is because they can sometimes provide an 'easy' answer for complicated situations, like the one we are in now.

Encourage your child to be a critical thinker, rather than just accepting everything they see online

Commercialism and financial exploitation: *hidden costs of advertising in apps, games and websites*

Young people can be at risk of commercial exploitation online. This can include apps, emails, advertising or marketing schemes that can trick or convince young people spend money online or enter their (or even your) card details. An example could be pop-ups or adverts asking you to complete a short survey, in return for £1000.

Remember, if something seems too good to be true, question it.

Support your child against extremist views by:

1. **Talking to them about any anxieties they may have, and provide them with factual information from reliable sources.**
2. **Educate yourself on the different apps that can be used and ensure the correct security on your child's device.**
3. **Talk openly to your child about the apps that they use – get them to teach you!**
4. **Report or block any pages that are spreading content that is upsetting or inappropriate material.**

For more guidance on how to do this, go to the 'Useful Resources for Parents' section of this document.

Help to keep your children safe by:

1. **Talking to your child about keeping personal information private.**
2. **Blocking popups and spam emails on devices.**
3. **Considering using a generic family email for registering online forms.**

Did you know?

…most Government communication will not be through email, so if you receive an email asking you to pay a bill or tax, always call the organisation directly. You can find their number on their official website – do not ring the number in the email.

How to report concerning material

If there is any concern that a young person or child has had inappropriate contact or has been approached by a stranger online, you should report this to the **Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre** or the police.

You can report online material promoting terrorism or extremism via the **Online Tool**. The online tool is for reporting illegal or harmful information, pictures or videos found on the internet.

You can also report a page or post to the site you are on **Parentzone** have information on how to do this.

Resources you can use with your children

Learn about Online Safety, help sheets for parents and worksheets for children - ThinkUKnow

Useful resources for Parents

1. Tips on how to support your child at home - ThinkUKnow
2. Educating yourself on the different apps and security features - NSPCC Net-Aware
3. Screen time tips – Webwise
4. Talking to your child about scary world news – Mental Health Foundation
5. Helping you to identify fake news – Common Sense Media
6. Reliable news sites - Newsround First News, BBC News, Sky News, The Guardian, The Independent
7. Resources to help you to understand how to keep your child safe from extremist views – Educate Against Hate
8. Information for parents on school closures – GOV.UK
9. Guidance on supporting children's mental health and wellbeing – GOV.UK