

SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO STAY SAFE ONLINE

The Internet offers exciting benefits and tremendous opportunities, whether using it to send emails, shop or socialise with friends.

The Internet is an essential part of young people's lives enabling them to connect with friends, learn, play games, watch movies and have fun.

For children and young people with SEND:

- the Internet is a great enabler for those who may find physical social interaction situations difficult to access due to physical, sensory or communication needs
- the relative 'anonymity' of the Internet may remove barriers of discrimination based upon how a person looks or communicates
- those children and young people with a less common type of SEND they might be able to share their experiences and information with those in other parts of the UK and other countries if there isn't anyone who lives close and whom they could meet in person

The Internet is an important part of their lives but if not used safely, can expose them to many risks. Understanding these risks can help you to keep your children safer online.

However the Internet and Online World is constantly changing, these changes and sometimes a lack of knowledge can make adults feel wary about how to keep children safe online.

Reasons why children and young people might be more vulnerable online could include:

- They may not have fully understood lessons in school about internet safety
- They may not understand that information about internet safety directly relates to them e.g. if a student has a very literal understanding of the world and a metaphor has been used that they do not understand
- Children and young people with SEND often have a very trusting relationship with adults, e.g. those who may be supporting their intimate care needs, that are different to those of their non-disabled peers, so may not understand that online, this type of relationship is not appropriate
- They are often more used to sharing information with adults who provide care for them, e.g. medical professionals, so may not understand that online this type of information sharing is not appropriate
- Children and young people with SEND may feel more socially isolated in the 'real world' so are looking for any form of social contact in the 'virtual world', even if they are not sure if it is safe or appropriate
- They may have less experience of socialising with peers so may find it more difficult to spot danger signs
- Children and young people with SEND may be spending more time online as they have fewer recreational activities outside the home than non-disabled peers
- Adults looking for children and young people to groom or internet trolls may perceive children and young people with SEND easier to target.

There are practical steps we can all take to help keep children and young people safe.



Encourage conversation - be open

Talk to your children and young people about being and staying safe when online, it can be very difficult for them to understand the risks of using the Internet. **What they must understand is that online actions have real life consequences.**

Explain that everything they put online about themselves builds up their online profile and reputation – and that this can be good or bad depending on the content

Ensure your child knows the risks of accepting friend requests from strangers online. Explain that once a picture, video or comment is sent or posted online, it can be very difficult to remove and it can be shared with others, without them even knowing. Once it is online they no longer have control of how it is used.

Ensure they know how to report and block people online who may send nasty or inappropriate messages or content. Most importantly, make sure your child knows that they can talk to you and tell you about anything that happens online that make them feel scared, worried or uncomfortable. **Removing access to the internet will not solve the problem.** Remember, the vast majority of children and young people use it without coming to any harm.

Let them teach you how to use the Internet



There's nothing so empowering for a child or young person than to be your 'teacher', so let them show you how they access social media, how they post messages, what games and apps they like to use or how they visit a website.

This will encourage them to show you which websites they use, what games they play, what's cool right now and what's not and where to find the funniest pictures. This makes having conversations much easier with children about important safety features, using privacy settings and reporting concerns.



Set rules and agree boundaries

Discuss with your child or young person how their internet use will be monitored and the need for your child to earn trust and privacy online depending on their age/ability.

Try to reach common ground with your children about when, what and for how long they can access the Internet.

Be especially aware of setting rules relating to your child's use of webcams and any applications or devices which allow voice or video chat.

Make sure they understand that they must **never** give passwords away and be careful about what personal information (date of birth, address, phone number etc.) is shared online.



Content

Be aware that some apps, games and websites have age ratings. Most popular social networking sites and apps are only for users aged 13+.

Try to keep up with what social networks, apps, games and websites your child is using, and check how appropriate they are on a website such as Common Sense Media (www.commonsensemedia.org) or Net Aware (www.net-aware.org.uk)

Some online content is not suitable for children. This is true for content accessed and viewed via social networks, online games, blogs and websites. All of the major internet providers offer free filtering tools to help prevent age-inappropriate content being accessed on devices connected to the home internet, see <https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers/parental-controls-offered-your-home-internet-provider>

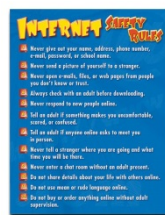
Check what parental controls are available for the specific device your child is using, see www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-and-resources/parents-and-carers/parents-guide-to-technology

Many web browsers have built-in tools and features to help you control the kind of content your child can view, see www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-and-resources/parents-and-carers/safety-tools-on-online-services

There are apps that can help filter out age-inappropriate content or help restrict some functions. Go to www.appleappstore.co.uk if your child has an Apple device, or www.googleplay.com if they have an Android device, and search for ‘parental controls’.

Internet enabled devices have settings that you can use to prevent your child from making in-app purchases within a game or app. You can also set up a password so your child can't purchase apps without your consent. For instructions on how to apply these parental spending controls to Apple, Android and gaming devices go to www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/smartphones-and-other-devices/

You can enable a GPS facility on smartphones and other devices. But again, make sure you discuss this with your child and explain why you might do this.



Contact

It is very important that your child understands that not everything or everyone online can be trusted. Encourage them to question people's motives and to challenge the idea of online friendship. They may not be who they say they are.

Alert your child to the fact that adding strangers as followers/friends on social media can give them access to any personal information they have posted on their online profiles.

Try watching online videos together that reinforce the message, lots can be found on YouTube at www.youtube.com/user/ceop

Privacy settings online may also allow you to customise the information that each friend is able to access. Sit down with your child and review their privacy settings – make sure they are aware of how much information they are sharing about themselves. You might find the social

networks checklists from the UK Safer Internet Centre useful (www.saferinternet.org.uk/social-network-checklists)

If you suspect your child is the victim of cyberbullying, remind them that they don't have to suffer in silence. There are lots of people they can tell, preferably a trusted adult, even if they don't feel they can tell you.

There are practical steps you and your child can take which will help the situation:

- block, mute, delete or report the person who is being mean
- try not to reply or retaliate
- take screenshots* and save all evidence of nasty messages.

*A screenshot (also known as a screengrab, screen dump or screen capture) takes a picture of what's on the device's screen and saves it as an image.

For instructions on how to take a screenshot on your device, Google 'How to take a screenshot' or visit www.take-a-screenshot.org

For older children, make sure they know how to block, report or delete contacts that are upsetting them. You could signpost them to the 'Buzz' where there is information on how to deal with cyberbullying: www.ndcsbuzz.org.uk/stayingsafeonline

Lots of websites have their own reporting tools where cyberbullying can be reported, see www.childnet.com/resources/how-to-make-a-report

If you have concerns that your child is, or has been, the subject of inappropriate sexual Child Exploitation contact the Online Protection Centre www.ceop.police.uk

Top Tip: Regularly reviewing friends lists and removing unwanted contacts is a useful step.



TOP TIPS FOR 0-5 YEAR OLDS

- As a parent put yourself in control. Make use of parental controls. Use passwords so they can't go online without asking you first
- Use safe search engines such as swiggle.org.uk or kids-search.com
- Set boundaries about when and for how long your child can use devices. Use devices in communal areas
- Set your homepage to a child-friendly site and give your child a user account which only allows access to sites and apps you have chosen
- Help them learn through games - you can choose safe, fun and educational games free of charge from providers such as Fisher Price

TOP TIPS FOR 6-10 YEAR OLDS

- As a parent put yourself in control. Make use of parental controls. Use passwords so they can't go online without asking you first
- Agree boundaries, be clear what your child can and can't do online – where they can use the internet, how much time they can spend online, the sites they can visit and the type of information they can share
- Explore together by asking what your child is doing online. Encourage them to use devices in communal areas, so you can see which sites they are visiting

- Check if it is suitable; the age ratings that come with games, apps, films and social networks are a good guide to whether they are suitable for your child



TOP TIPS FOR 11-13 YEAR OLDS

- As a parent put yourself in control. Make use of parental controls on any internet enabled device including your child's mobile phone
- Agree boundaries, be clear what your child can and can't do online – where they can use the internet, how much time they can spend online, the sites they can visit and the type of information they can share
- Have a conversation; the best way to find out what your child is doing online is to ask them to tell you about which sites they like to visit. Discuss what they might come across
- Check if it is suitable; the age ratings that come with games, apps, films and social networks are a good guide to whether they are suitable for your child
- Get them clued up about social networking; talk to your child about the benefits and risks of social networking before they join any sites. Let them know anything they upload, email or message could stay around forever online
- Keep talking and stay interested in what they are doing online. Discuss what they might have come across, don't be afraid to tackle difficult subjects like cyberbullying and sexting
- Make sure they have high privacy settings on social networks. Encourage them to regularly change their passwords and never to share or put online any of their personal details like phone number, address, school
- Let them know anything they upload, email or message could stay online forever. Remind them, they should only post things online that they would not mind you, their teacher or future employer seeing
- Make sure safety and privacy settings are activated on their mobile devices. Be aware that using public WiFi might not filter inappropriate content, so look for friendly WiFi symbols when you are out and about



Safe Surf Zone
Safe Filtered WiFi
www.friendlywifi.com

TOP TIPS FOR 14+ YEAR OLDS

- Adjust the parental controls on your broadband and internet enabled devices, depending on your child's age