

Play your part for a better internet

Background Information

This year's theme for Safer Internet Day is 'Play your part for a better internet'. It is important that parents are also engaged and informed to ensure their children can get the most out of the internet. Childnet, as part of the UK Safer Internet Centre, has created a parents presentation, conversation starters for parents, a parents letter to send home, a poster to promote the parent session, a parent information sheet with useful links and of course this script, to make it as easy as possible for you to run a parent session in your school/organisation for Safer Internet Day. Also included is Childnet's 'Supporting Young People Online' leaflet which covers the same areas as the presentation, can be easily printed and is also available in 12 additional languages here: www.childnet.com/resources/supporting-young-people-online

***Things to print out in advance of delivering this session:** Parent information sheet, 'Supporting Young People Online' sheet, Conversation starters.

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The internet is an amazing resource which enables children and young people to connect, communicate and be creative in a number of different ways, on a range of devices. However, the internet is always changing, and being able to keep up to date with your children's use of technology can be a challenge. You may sometimes feel that your children have better technical skills than you do, however children and young people still need advice and protection when it comes to managing their lives online and using the internet positively and safely. Today I hope to give you an overview of some of the risks your child may encounter whilst online. This will be followed by some practical advice to get you thinking about how you can support your child to get the most out of the internet. We have grouped potential online risks into 4 categories.

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Children need to be aware of the impact that their online activity can have on both themselves and other people, and the digital footprints that they create on the internet. These footprints can be perceived positively or negatively by people viewing the content, and for young people this may have a longer term impact on their online reputation, well-being and future career prospects. Encourage your children to put their best foot forward online and to show respect for others as they would be expected to do offline.

It's easy to feel anonymous online and it's important that children are aware of who is able to view, and potentially share, the information that they may have posted. When using the internet, it's important to keep personal information safe and think carefully about who information is shared with. If your child uses services that include privacy settings then support them in putting these in place to ensure they have greater control over who can see their messages, photos and other content posted online. Discuss with your child the importance of reporting inappropriate conversations, messages, images and behaviours and how this can be done. Remind them that they can always tell an adult if something online has worried or upset them.

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Some online content is not suitable for children. Some content is intended for adults, such as pornographic websites and gambling websites. Other content may be hurtful or harmful such as content expressing extreme views or promoting harmful behaviour. This content could be accessed and viewed via social networks, online games, apps, blogs and websites. There are filtering options that can be activated on home broadband connections and controls on individual devices that can restrict the content children may discover online. These may be

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useful tools for your family but it is important to also discuss with your children what they might see online. Details on how to activate parental controls and filtering can be found on the UK Safer Internet Centre site. **(on parent information sheet – section 4)**

It's important for children to consider the reliability of online material and be aware that it might not be true or written with a bias. Encourage your child to think critically about what they read online and to check several websites when searching for information.

There can be legal consequences for using or downloading copyrighted content, without seeking the author's permission. To find out more about the law and downloading film, music and television have a look at Childnet's guide to downloading **(on parent information sheet – section 4)**.

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It is important for children to realise that new friends made online may not be who they say they are and that once a friend is added to an online account, they may be sharing their personal information with them. Regularly reviewing friends/followers lists and removing unwanted contacts is a useful step. Privacy settings online may also allow you to customise the information that each friend is able to access and via the 'Safety Tools' link on your **parent information sheet – section 4** you can find out how to do this on various services.

Remind your child to always tell you or another trusted adult if they ever receive any messages from other users that try to coerce or persuade them to do anything that makes them feel worried or uncomfortable.

If you have concerns that your child is, or has been, the subject of inappropriate sexual contact or approach by another person, it's vital that you report it to the police via the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre **(on parent information sheet – section 5)**.

If your child is the victim of cyberbullying, this can also be reported online and offline. Remind your child that they should save all the messages, photos and other content received as evidence, and should never retaliate against malicious comments made towards them online. Reinforce with your child the importance of telling a trusted adult if someone is bullying them or making them feel uncomfortable, or if one of their friends is being bullied online.

If you have time, you can show some of the films created for Safer Internet Day 2016 to highlight the laws around online behaviour, particularly with regards to hate speech, as well as the experiences of those who have received abuse online based on their religion, special needs or disability: <http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/safer-internet-day/2016/sid-tv>.

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Young people's privacy and enjoyment online can sometimes be affected by advertising and marketing schemes, which can also mean inadvertently spending money online, for example within smartphone or tablet apps. Encourage your children to keep their personal information private; you could suggest using a family email address when filling in online forms and this will mean they will avoid being inundated with spam and junk email. Learn how to block pop ups, most web browsers have these now turned on as default but double check on the browser you and family use.

You may have heard news stories in the past of children running up huge bills as a result of buying coins or gems in-game? To avoid this happening, especially with younger children, explore the options for turning off or restricting in-app purchasing on devices. If you are unsure how to do this you can visit the UK Safer Internet Centre's Parent's Guide to Technology **(on parent information sheet – section 4)**.

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Having spoken about the possible risks it is important to remember that the internet is a really positive tool that makes our lives much easier. It can be an intimidating world and knowing where to start can be daunting so the UK Safer Internet Centre have put together a checklist of simple steps for you to take to help support your child online.

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(You may not wish to discuss all of these as they all feature on the 'Supporting Young People Online' sheet. You can always select a few to focus on.)

- There are real advantages in maintaining an open dialogue with your child about their internet use, encourage them to talk to you about their time online; for example who they're talking to, what services they are using, and any issues that they may be experiencing.
- Create a family agreement to establish your children's boundaries, and your expectations, when on the internet. Give your child strategies to deal with any online content that they are not comfortable with – such as turning off the screen, telling an adult they trust and using online reporting facilities. A template agreement and guide can be downloaded from www.childnet.com/have-a-conversation
- Consider using filtering software to block unwanted content. In addition to filtering, remember that discussion with your child, and involvement in their internet use, are both effective ways to educate them about the internet.
- Encourage your children to 'think before you post.' Online actions can impact not only yourself but the lives of others. Content posted privately online can be publicly shared by others, and may remain online forever.
- Understand the law. Some online behaviour may break the law, for example when comments online threaten or incite hatred.
- Familiarise yourself with the privacy settings and reporting features available on popular sites and services.
- If your child is being bullied online, save all available evidence and know where to report the incident, for example to the school, service provider, or the police if the law has been broken.
- Familiarise yourself with the age ratings for games and apps which can help to indicate the level and suitability of the content. Also see if online reviews are available from other parents as these may be helpful.
- Encourage your children to protect their personal information, and create strong passwords for every account.

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Thank you for listening! To stay up to date and to find out more you can use social media to follow or get in touch with the UK Safer Internet Centre or you can email Childnet directly.

