Keeping Your Children Safe Online

Advice for parents and carers to help support children and young people in their safe and responsible use of the internet.

What do I need to know?

The internet is always changing, and being able to keep up to date with your children's use of technology can be a challenge, especially if you feel that your children may have better technical skills than you do. However, children and young people still need support and guidance when it comes to managing their lives online and using the internet positively and safely.

A simple and effective way to get involved with your children and their lives online is through discussion. Why not use our conversation starters for parents and carers to get the ball rolling?

Conversation starter ideas:

Ask your children to tell you about the sites they like to visit and what they enjoy doing online.

Ask them about how they stay safe online. What tips do they have for you, and where did they learn them? What is OK and not OK to share?

Ask them if they know where to go for help, where to find the safety advice, privacy settings and how to report or block on the services they use.

Encourage them to help. Perhaps they can show you how to do something better online or they might have a friend who would benefit from their help and support.

Taking About: Privacy And Data

Privacy is the ability to keep certain things to yourself when you are online, for them not to be seen by or shared with others.

Personal data is information about you collected by the apps and websites you visit (like the things you like and open).

Young people love going online and a big part of this is being able to see what others are doing and to share what they and their families are up to. The devices they use help them to connect with others but it also means young people need to think about what they are sharing online and who they share this with.

Privacy And Data

Online Privacy

In its purest form privacy is about being able to protect parts of your life from others. On the internet things tend to be very different. A young child deciding on their username and avatar on a game will do so knowing that other players will see this. A teenager might want lots of their friends to be able to see a photo of them having a great time. For some young people, sharing our lives with others is just part of being online and many will be very used to seeing celebrities doing this.

Privacy And Data

Personal Data

Our personal data includes our name, age and where we live. Some of these bits of information will be needed when young people first use an app or when they get a new device and they can be unsure of who will see this. Our personal data also includes what we do when we are online too, like the websites we visit, the places we visit and the things we buy. These are all examples of personal data that is collected, tracked and passed on when we are online. As we spend more time online we are creating personal data at a rate never seen before. The personal data of children is being collected too.

Talking About: Location Services

What are location services?

These are the symbols used by Android and Apple devices for location services. They are used to indicate when a device is actively calculating its current location.

This can be done in a number of ways but most commonly uses GPS (global positioning system) to pinpoint the location of the device, and therefore its owner.

GPS uses satellites to provide location information to the receiver in the device. It does not require data or phone reception as it operates separately from these systems, however devices now will often use a combination of GPS, internet and telephone systems to provide geolocation information, which can then be shared through a variety of services.

These are the symbols used by Android and Apple devices for location services

Location Services

How is that information used?

Geolocation information is used in lots of different ways, by both a device's operating system and by other apps that may be installed.

Some services enable users to check into a specific location (for example on social media), others log movements in real time (mapping services and some games) and lots of services will use a device's location to try and provide you with more relevant information.

For example, if you search the name of a chain of shops online, the internet browser may use geolocation information to identify which branches of that shop are closest to you and will then show you these at the top of the first page of search results.

What are the risks?

Some services allow users to share geolocation information with other people – friends, family, or even strangers.
For adults and children alike, it's important to ask: do I really want to broadcast this information to everyone?
For example logging in at home not only tells people when you are at home but also tells people where your home is. The same rules apply for your friend's houses and school – if you wouldn't want to put yourself at risk by broadcasting your personal address then why would you do it to your friends?
For young people in particular, even if they're not sharing a location which is important to them, there are always risks involved with sharing their live location at a given time, especially if that information is visible to strangers.
Finally checking in regularly from the same locations can develop patterns and lead to people building up an accurate picture of someone's movements, which could also lead to safety concerns.

Location Services

Is using location services ever okay?

Of course! Location services can be really useful and some apps need location information to do their job. Services like weather apps, mapping apps or travel planner apps will use your location to provide you with the most relevant or up-to-date information.

Sharing your location with close friends and family can also be useful. You may want to track your child's movements as they travel home from school to ensure they're safe or two friends meeting up could share their live location to help find each other.

Location Services

What advice can I share with my child?

Discussing how to use the internet safely and positively with your child is always a great idea and talking about location services is a great way to help your child protect their personal information.

Why not share these top tips with your child?

▶ **Use account and privacy settings to manage who can see your location** - Remember that the majority of services will have tools to manage whether or not you wish to share your location, these can often be accessed via the privacy or account settings. Some services may have geolocation activated as a default, so you will need to actively turn this setting off if you don't want to reveal your location when posting and sharing content. On mobile devices you can usually turn off location services for all apps within the 'general settings' menu.

▶ **Think about where you are checking in!** - Sometimes it can be easy to find things out about people online, but you need to ask yourself if you really want to broadcast this information to everyone? For example, checking in at home not only tells people when you are at home but also tells people where your home is.

▶ **Avoid building up a picture of your average week** - Checking in regularly from the same locations can reveal a develop pattern or routine and may lead to people building up an accurate picture of your movements, which can lead to safety concerns.

▶ **Are your updates linked to other accounts?**
If location updates on one service or social network are linked to a public account on another, you may be publishing to a larger audience than you think. Make sure all linked accounts are visible only to friends.

Talking About: Social Media

Social media apps such as Snapchat, TikTok and Instagram are incredibly popular with young people.

These types of sites allow young people to be creative online, keep in touch with their friends, share photos and videos, and much more.

Many sites have a minimum user age of 13, although some sites, such as LEGO Life and PopJam, are specifically designed for younger children.

Social Media

What Are The Key Risks?

The internet can be a fantastic place for children, providing them with a wide range of opportunities. When it comes to using social media, recognising the positives and valuing your child's opinion shows that you are interested in their online world, and want to support them with their experiences.
Social media is not without its challenges, however, and children and young people need to be taught how to recognise and manage the risk factors that they may encounter.

▶ Whilst social media provides a fantastic platform for entertainment, communication and learning, it is not possible to control what other people choose to share, and they may come across upsetting content. Young people must also remember that content they upload online can be further shared by anyone who sees it, and it is very difficult to 'take back' what they may regret later.

Social Media

What Are The Key Risks?

▶ Social media provides opportunities for children and young people to communicate with people outside of their offline friendship circle and this can be a positive thing. However, there is a risk of inappropriate or harmful contact from adults online, possibly by pretending to be a child, or using an anonymous profile.

▶ Being kind and respectful online is something everyone should try and do. However, the ability to be anonymous online may make people think that they can be unkind without consequences.

Social Media

Top Tips

▶ Ask your child what their favourite apps are and find out the recommended age for them. Talk to your child about why age limits are important

▶ Ensure that your child knows what personal information is, and what is okay / not okay to share online, e.g. using a nickname rather than a real name.

▶ Protect their online reputation by encouraging your child to "think before you post," and use the safety settings provided to help manage their 'digital footprint'.

▶ Make a report: Social media sites should have clear and accessible places to make a report. Make sure you talk with your child about these tools and ensure that they know how to use them.

▶ Privacy settings: It is possible to set profiles to 'private' or 'friends only'. This is different to a public profile which can be seen by anyone.

▶ Handling pressure: If your child is being pressured into doing something, let them know that they can talk to you about it and they won't be in trouble for asking for help.

Talking About: Reporting - How To Make A Report Online

Most services have rules about what kind of content is allowed on the site. Making a report is a way of alerting them that someone or something has broken these rules.

Reporting

What Can I Report?

On many services you can report content (such as images, videos or text), other users, comments and even adverts. However, action will only be taken if your report shows that someone or something has broken the rules of the service. Rules vary depending on the platform you are using but the types of material which are likely to break the rules include:

- Impersonation (pretending to be someone else)
- Hate speech
- Violent or extreme content
- Pornographic content
- Harassment, threats, abuse and bullying

Reporting

What Happens When I Make A Report?

After you make a report, the service may take action to remove the offending user or content. Other actions may include age-gating content (so it is only available to adult users), adding content warnings, or giving users temporary suspensions or warnings.

For more information and advice about reporting harmful content online and for support if a report has been made but no action has been taken, visit Report Harmful Content's website.

How Do I Report On A Specific Service?

Each website has a different way of reporting. You will need to look in the reporting section on each of their websites to see their process

Reporting

Other Places To Report To

You may also be able to report online harmful or illegal content elsewhere.

If you:

- are suspicious about someone's communication with a child report to CEOP

- see online child sexual abuse images or videos you should report to the Internet Watch Foundation

- see content that incites hatred you should report to True Vision

- want to make a complaint about an advert, television or radio programme or other type of content that you think is unsuitable for children to see or hear, you can find out more about how to do this through Ofcom.

- want to make a complaint about an online advertisement then you can report this to The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA).

- are under the age of 18 and want to report a nude image of you that's been shared online you can do so through Childline's Report Remove tool.

- have been 'scammed, ripped off or conned' report to Action Fraud, or on 0300 123 2040. This service is run by the National Fraud and Cyber Crime Reporting Centre.

- see something online that supports, directs or glorifies terrorism, report it to Action Counters Terrorism.

Talking About: Screen Time and Healthy Balance

Screen time is any amount of time spent in front of a screen on any device. Digital devices provide many great opportunities for the whole family, including activities for learning and creativity, as well as entertainment and enjoyment. During the Covid-19 pandemic, these benefits became even more important and screen time increased. However, we hear from parents and carers that managing screen time can be a source of conflict with their children.
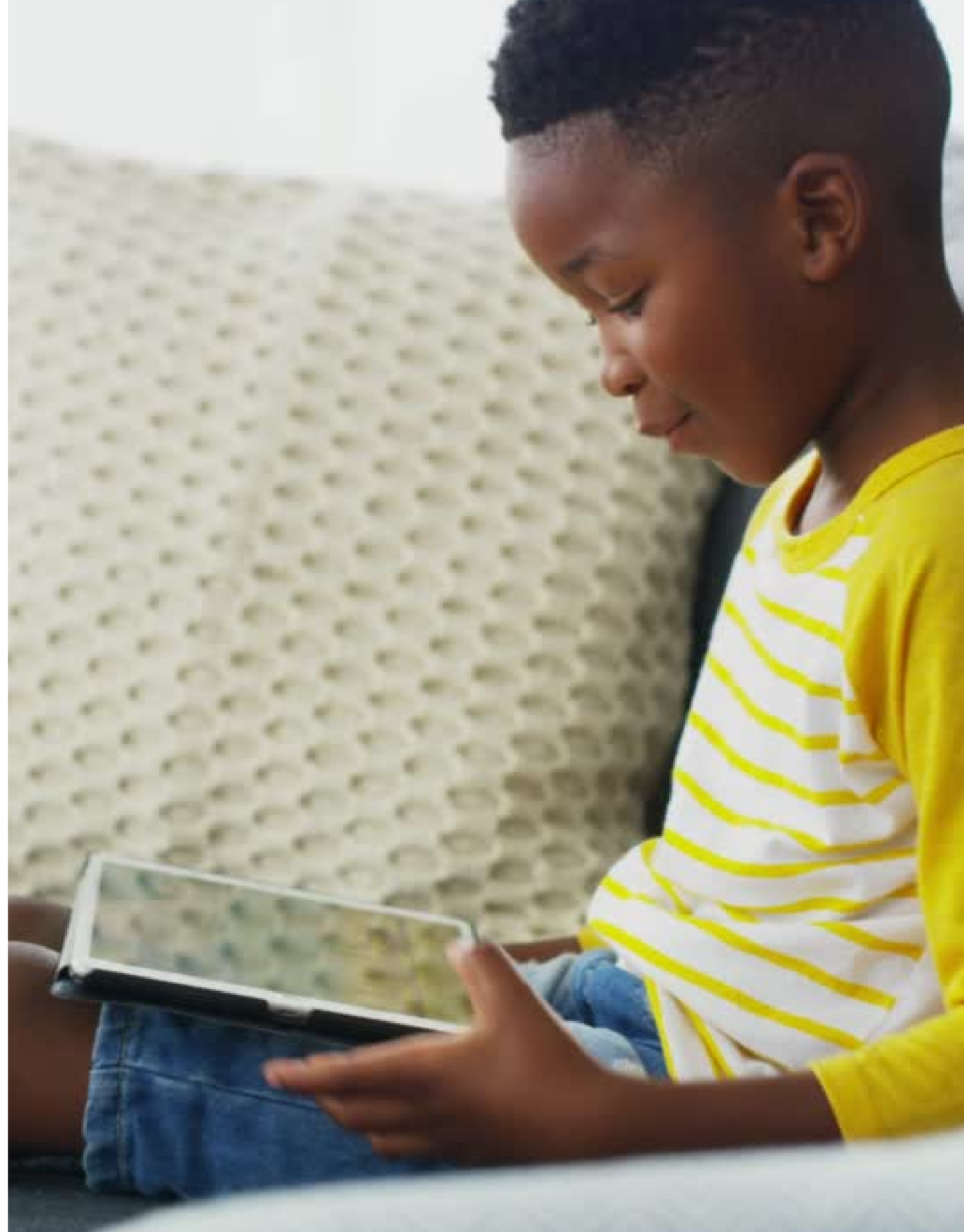
Screen Time and Healthy Balance

How Much Screen Time Is OK For My Child?

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) have produced guidance for screen time for under-18s. Drawing on research and studies on the impacts of screen time, they have concluded that there is no 'recommended' or 'set amount' of time that children should be limited to on devices. Instead the focus should be on ensuring that time spent on devices does not replace sleep, exercise, or family time. They advise that devices should be avoided in the hour before bed to promote healthy sleep

Screen Time and Healthy Balance

Is Screen Time Bad For My Child?

Using devices offer many opportunities, but of course there are risks as well. Most experts think it's more important to focus on quality over quantity. For example, think about the value your child gets from different screen-based activities (talking with friends and family, doing homework, watching videos, playing games, etc).

What Is The Best Way To Address Screen Time With My Family?

If you're worried that excessive use of devices is impacting your family, start with an open and honest conversation. Remember that trying to actively count or keep track of screen time hours may fail to take into account the value and opportunities provided by using devices, and raise anxiety levels unnecessarily. It's important to consider the bigger picture of how, when and where your family is using technology: creating a family technology plan is one way to do this.

Screen Time and Healthy Balance

How Can I Support My Child With Managing Their Screen Time?

If you are concerned that excessive use of technology is impacting your family, then there are steps you can take to manage this. An open dialogue is important here. Have conversations and help your child to recognise how going online makes them feel and the importance of taking a break when they need to. Younger children may need additional support in doing this, such as timers and reminders. For older children you could also encourage them to turn off notifications, which will help them get used to checking their device and apps on their terms, instead of when they hear/see the notification. Another useful tip is to help remind them of the things they love to do offline; this will encourage a healthy mix of online and offline activities.

## Can My Child Become 'Addicted' To Their Devices?

we try to avoid using the word 'addicted' in relation to technology, as it implies that a person's use of it is out of their control, when in fact we want to encourage children to take responsibility for the way they use their devices. If you are worried about the amount of time your child spends on their devices there's lots you can do to help. Encouraging and supporting them to use screen time settings to monitor their time, as well as helping them turn off features like notifications, can make a huge difference. It's important to let them know how you feel, and remaining calm during the conversation will mean they are more likely to listen. Why not start by offering to put your own devices aside for a short period of time, and ask if they would consider doing the same whilst you talk. Remember: you are a great example for your child, so try to role model a healthy online/offline balance.

Talking About: Online Bullying

Online bullying, or cyberbullying, is when someone uses the internet to target and deliberately upset someone.

Cyberbullying often happens on personal devices that young people have continuous access to. This means it can happen anywhere and at any time, so it can feel like it's hard to escape. The bully could be either someone that they know, or a complete stranger.

It can be hard to control the spread of messages, images and videos sent online, which means many people could see them in a short period of time. However, online bullying can leave a trail of evidence which can be helpful when dealing with the incident and reporting it.
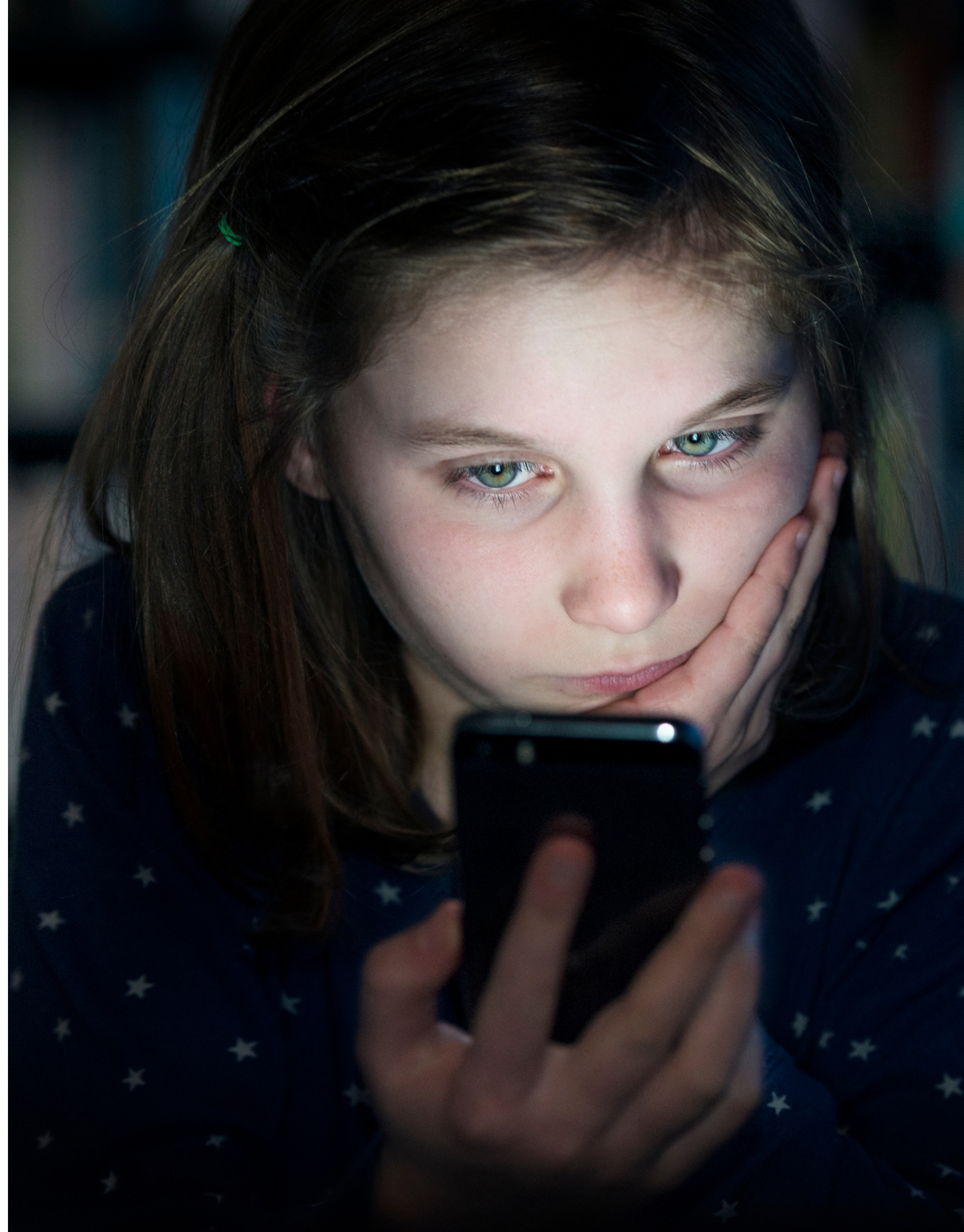
Online Bullying

Types Of Online Bullying:

Messages - Sending messages aiming to upset, abuse or humiliate someone.

Comments - Writing remarks under someone else's post, which others can also see.

Tagging Someone - Linking someone's profile to a status, or embarrassing photo or video.

Memes - Identifying someone with a photo and/or with a caption, which is meant humorous but aims to humiliate others.

Images - Putting an image online of someone without their consent, or editing an image of someone. This includes nude images.

In-direct - Negative comments to a group, where a name isn't mentioned. However it is obvious to all who is being talked about. E.g., 'You know whose dress is disgusting...'

Exclusion - Deliberately leaving someone out of an online group, or chat.

Outing - Revealing sensitive or personal information about someone online, without their consent.

Harassment - Putting aggressive pressure on someone or intimidating them.

Impersonation - Pretending to be someone with a view to belittling or humiliating them.

Voting- Setting up, or contributing to, an abusive poll about someone.

Online Bullying

What Are The Impacts?

If a child is being bullied online they can often feel scared, worried and overwhelmed by the situation. They might be embarrassed by what's happening, angry, confused, and even feel physically unwell.

There are no conclusive signs which will tell you if your child is being bullied online. Whilst some children and young people might show obvious signs of worry or upset, these could relate to a range of issues, and other children might hide it altogether.

However, look out for:

Higher levels of emotion, such as anger

Changes in mood

Problems sleeping and eating

Low self-esteem

Self-harm

Withdrawal from online activities

Sudden changes in behaviour

Bullying others

Online Bullying

Top Tips

**Encourage your child to save the evidence and show you -**
They can do this by taking a screenshot of what has happened or by keeping the messages they have received.

Don't deny access to technology - Although it can be very tempting to remove a device from a child if they are being bullied online, it may prevent your child from coming to you about online worries again.

Don't reply - Most of the time a bully is looking for a reaction when they are being mean online. Tell your child not to reply. Instead, they should tell a trusted adult what has happened.

Use the tools available - Report, block and take a screenshot. You can report a person or profile, as well as content, e.g. a post, video or comment. This will then be flagged to the service who will review it against their terms and conditions.

Speak to the school - It is always worth having a conversation with your child's school about their experience of cyberbullying. Schools can offer support and advice to you and your child. Consider contacting their class teacher, form tutor, Head of Year, or a pastoral lead.
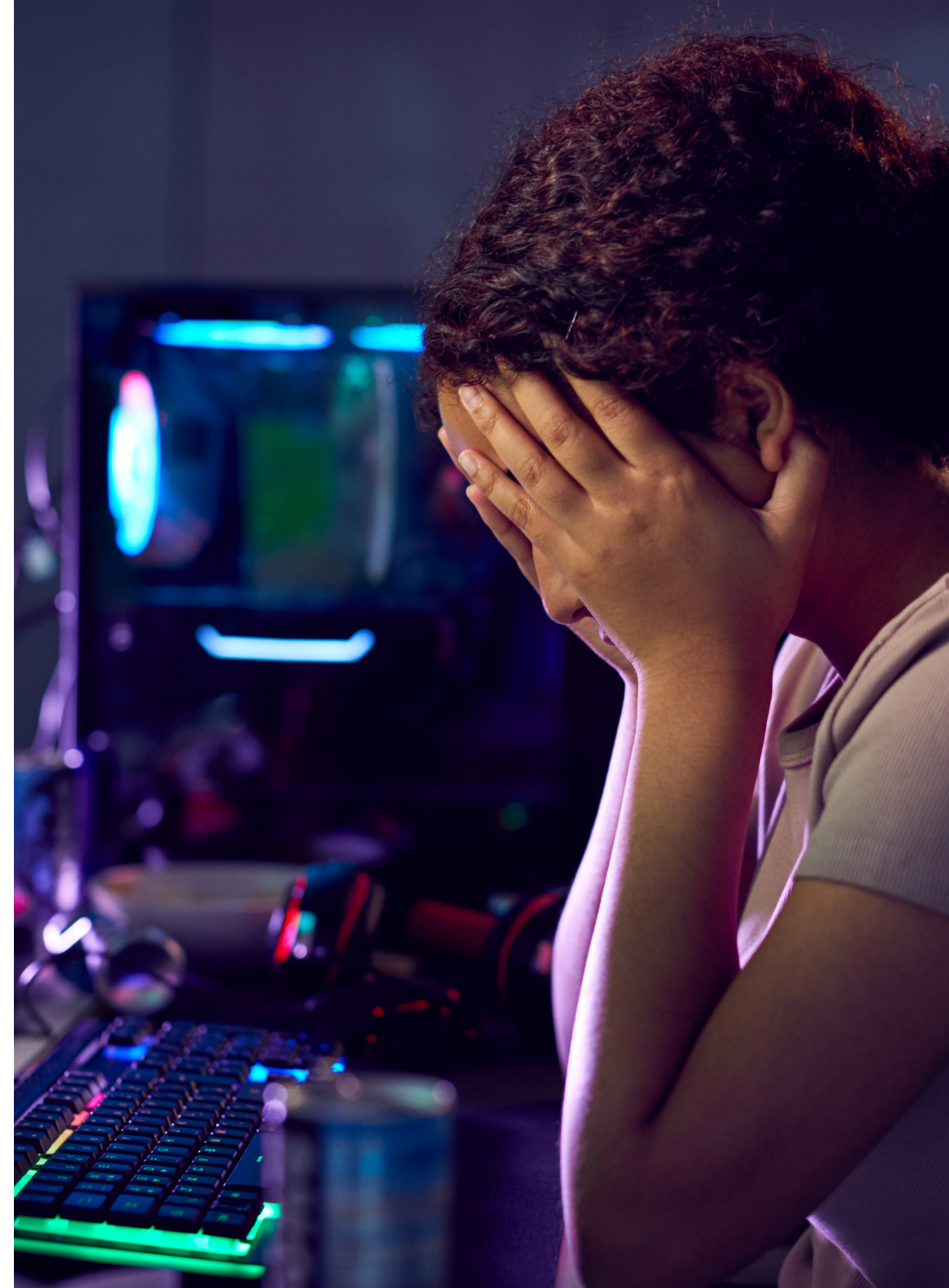
Talking About: Online Sexual Harassment

Online sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual behaviour online. It can make a person feel threatened, exploited, coerced, humiliated, upset, sexualised or discriminated against.
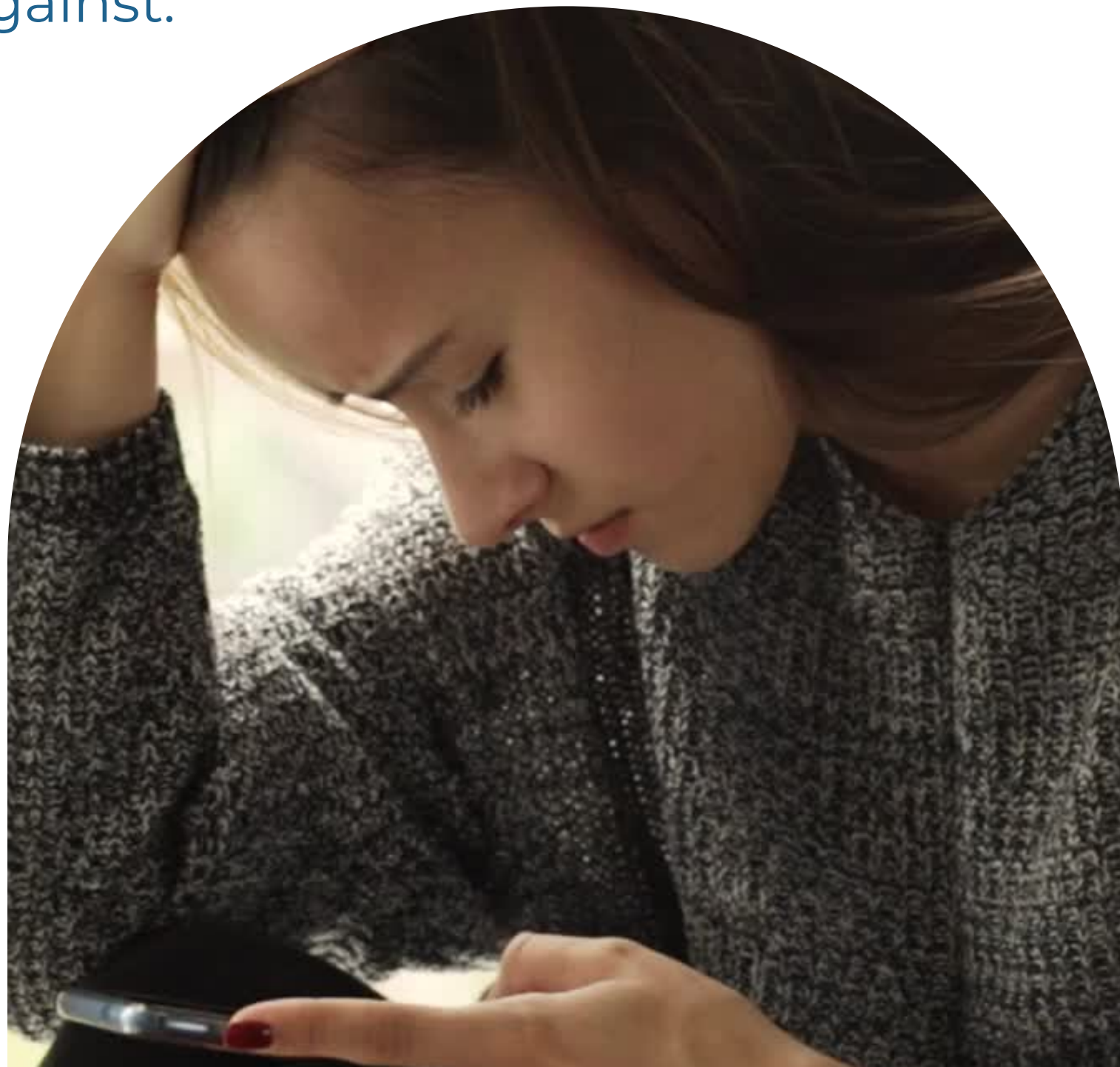
When cyberbullying is of a sexual nature, we call it online sexual harassment (OSH). Unfortunately, many young people are witnessing or experiencing this type of behaviour and aren't getting the support they need.

This advice is for online sexual harassment that happens between children and young people who know each other, or know of each other, online.

Online Sexual Harassment

Unwanted Sexual Behaviour Online Can:

▶ Happen anywhere online (social media, games, messaging apps, public or private)

▶ Happen publicly, privately, or in both ways at the same time

▶ Use images, videos, posts, messages, pages, memes, emojis

▶ Include a variety of different behaviours, possibly happening at the same time

▶ Overlap with offline experiences of sexual harassment

▶ Overlap with other forms of discrimination

Online Sexual Harassment

What Does Online Sexual Harassment Look Like?

Bullying - Bullying someone for online behaviour that is outside of common gender stereotypes e.g. bullying a boy for watching a make-up tutorial or a girl for using a profile picture showing her short haircut

Body Shaming - Embarrassing someone for the way their body looks e.g. mean comments on a photo about somebody's body shape, particularly if it seems to target or criticise perceived attractiveness

Pornography - Sharing online pornography, whether as a link or image, because it was seen by the sender as 'funny'

Sexting - Sending a nude or nearly nude image of a peer to others

Online Sexual Harassment

What Does Online Sexual Harassment Look Like?

Homophobic Language - Using offensive homophobic language e.g. calling someone 'gay' to mark them out as 'other' in some way

Photo Editing - Editing photos to make them look sexual or gendered e.g. adding emojis on a photo that are meant to represent sexual body parts

Upskirting - Taking photos underneath someone's clothes, without their knowledge e.g. taking a photo up someone's shorts on the school bu, or of someone getting changed at a sleepover

Online Sexual Harassment

Why Does It Happen?

Just like in the offline world, sexual harassment happens online too. Children may be copying harmful behaviour they see elsewhere, such as TV shows or other adults, whether they know they are doing this or not. It could have started as a joke between friends that went too far and became offensive. Content might be shared by those who want to be popular, by people who are 'sticking up' for a friend, or because of peer pressure. It might also be an effort to hurt others on purpose, e.g. to hurt another young person after a friendship or relationship break-down or to embarrass someone.

What Age Group Can It Happen To?

Online sexual harassment can happen to anyone of any age online. Our research with young people from 9-17 year olds shows how children of different ages are being affected.

Why Should I Talk To My Child About This?

Talking about sexual issues can be difficult and embarrassing for children, so they need you to give them the opportunities to tell you about anything that is worrying them or confusing them. Children may experience confusing or upsetting behaviour online, but not know what to do about it. If not challenged, they might see this behaviour as a normal part of being online.
Children can hold back from asking for help from their parents or carers because they feel worried about getting in trouble, having their device taken away or letting their parents down. They need to know you want to support them.

Online Sexual Harassment

How Can I Talk To My Child About This?

Start with the positives. No need to lecture your child or sit down for a serious talk. Ask your child what they like doing online before approaching more sensitive topics.

Choose a time your child is relaxed, with no distractions nearby such as technology or siblings.

Make sure your child knows they can come to you with any problem they have, and you will be there for them. If your conversation doesn't go to plan, that's okay – try again.

What Can Stop Children Reporting OSH?

Think about the ways your child currently communicates you about difficult topics. They may not recognise it as something serious enough to report or may be worried about getting in trouble or getting blamed. Some children already face difficulties with language and communication, and may not yet know when and how to ask for help.

It may be particularly difficult for young people to ask for help if this will reveal something about their online activities that they do not want to share, for example sexual preference or sexuality.

Online Sexual Harassment

What Are The Signs My Child Is Affected By This?

These signs can be similar to the signs of lots of worries, but it's important to remember online sexual harassment could be a possible reason for them.

These signs might include:

- Not wanting to go to school or take part in activities that they usually enjoy.
- Other signs of anxiety such as frequent complaints of a stomach ache etc.
- Changes in how they use technology, such as turning off their screen quickly if they see you looking, or ignoring new messages.

Children are often very good at hiding their concerns. Create as many natural opportunities for talking together as possible, as they may not open up the first time you ask if something is wrong. Let them know that they can talk to you about anything.

Talking About: Online Grooming

Online grooming is where someone befriends a child online and builds up their trust with the intention of exploiting them and causing them harm.

Harm caused by grooming can be sexual abuse, both in person and online, and exploitation to obtain sexually explicit images and videos of the child. Grooming techniques could also be used to radicalise someone, or to obtain financial information from the child or their family.

Online Grooming

How Does It Happen And Who Is At Risk?

Groomers are very skilled at what they do and can often befriend a child by appearing to have the same hobbies and interests as them. Using fake accounts and photos, they may also appear to be the same age as the child.

However, not all groomers will choose to mask their age or gender. Some groomers may impersonate an aspirational figure, such as a modelling scout, sports coach, celebrity or influencer, whilst others may use their age and experience to develop a 'mentor' type relationship with their victim.

A groomer will use the same sites, games and apps as children in order to gain their trust and build a friendship. However, they may also seek to manipulate, blackmail and control the child, potentially isolating them from their friends and family.

Any child can be at risk of being groomed, regardless of age, gender, race or location. Some children may be more at risk due to other vulnerabilities or special educational needs and disabilities, and may find accessing support from a trusted adult or online reporting tools difficult.

Online Grooming

Top Tips

▶▶ **Discuss the difference between online and offline friends -** It's important to emphasise that, however nice a new friend online can seem, or however long they have spoken to them for, they are still a stranger.

▶▶ **Know the signs -** Talk to your child about 'red flags' in chats which are important to report, block and tell an adult about. These would include someone suggesting to meet up offline, asking for personal information or to send photos or videos, chats moving to private messages, or asking them to keep secrets.

▶▶ **Find out where the report and block buttons are -** Social media, apps, games and sites all offer reporting and blocking tools.You can find out more by visiting the UK Safer Internet Centre Safety Guides. You can also report grooming to CEOP.

▶▶ **Make sure your child knows you are there to help -** Worrying about how a parent or carer will react can prevent young people from asking for help. Make sure that your child knows that, no matter what has happened, you are there to help them.

▶▶ **Know where to get more support -** You can find out more about where to get support by visiting our pages for parents and carers and young people.

Talking About: Expiring Content

Expiring content is content that disappears after it has been viewed or that is only available for a certain amount of time.

Children and young people are growing up in a digital world where services such as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat all have features which allow users to post things that will eventually expire. It can be in many different forms and it's important to recognise that expiring content is a way of messaging and sharing photos that many young people use every day.

Expiring Content

Types Of Expiring Content

▶ **Stories -** Stories are a feature within many apps including Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat. This is where users can capture and post images and video content in a slideshow format. Content is usually available for only 24 hours from the time of posting. Stories also allow the addition of text, drawings and emojis to images or video clips. There are even features such as questions or polls which allow direct interaction with followers and audiences for a set amount of time.

▶ **Direct Messages -** A direct message (DM) is a private form of communication between social media users that is only visible to the sender and recipient(s). Not all direct messages will expire, but some platforms including Snapchat and Instagram allow users to send expiring direct messages. After someone opens an disappearing expiring photo or video that they've been sent, the message is no longer visible, unless the sender has allowed the replay function.

▶ **Photos/Images/'Snaps' -** Most of the popular social media apps among young people offer the feature of sending a photo, image or 'snap' to another person or group of people. 'Snaps' refers to images shared on Snapchat. These images normally can expire after they have been viewed once, however they can sometimes be replayed. Remember that even though the image may expire, a screenshot can still be taken, and the content can then be kept or shared on.

Expiring Content

Types Of Expiring Content

▶ **Videos -** This is where a user will post a video to their story, profile or in a direct message. In most cases, the video expires in 24 hours. However, Facebook offer the option of choosing the expiration time/date of videos that you post.

▶ **Questions and Polls -** Features such as questions or polls allow direct interaction with followers and audiences for a set amount of time.

▶ **Statuses -** Some apps, such as WhatsApp, offer users the opportunity to create a temporary status. The status disappears after 24 hours of the user uploading it. You can share photos, videos, text, links, and GIFs. If your account is private, then only your friends or followers will see this, however if you have a public account then anyone can view this before it expires.

▶ **Livestreaming -** Livestreaming can also be a form of expiring content, although on some services this footage is recorded and available to view after the livestream has ended.

Expiring Content

Why Are Children And Young People Using It?

Young people are using expiring content because it's fun, it's easy, it's exciting and it gives them the opportunity to share content they might not want permanently on their profile.

What Are The Risks?

- People may share more private and risky content as they believe it disappears.

- There is the potential for information to be taken and shared on by others even after it has expired. For example, screen shots can be taken of the content on many services, including Snapchat.

- Expiring content can be used by online bullies and can make reporting more difficult for the victim if they are unable to screenshot the content as evidence before it disappears.

Talking About: Downloading

There are many great ways of accessing and downloading music, film, TV and video safely online and it is important that children and young people understand how to download content legally.

Downloading

Music, Film And TV On The Internet – What You Should Know:

Copyright law applies to downloading, sharing and streaming just as in the world of physical CDs and DVDs. If you make music, film or TV content available to others on a file-sharing network, download from an illegal site, or sell copies without the permission of those who own the copyright, then you are breaking the law and could face penalties.

Staying Tuned In While Staying Legal:

There is a wide choice of legal sites where you can download or "stream" (transmit over the internet) music, film or TV content. Some are stores where you can buy downloaded tracks, albums, TV shows, videos or films to play on a computer, or a portable device or on a music player, like iTunes. Others charge a monthly subscription fee and let you stream from an internet-connected device at any time, like Spotify or Netflix. Some services provide entertainment for free, supported by advertising.

Downloading

What You Can And Can't Do With Music, Film And TV Online:

It is illegal to upload or download copyrighted files without permission from the person who owns the rights. File sharing services can, in theory, be used legally, but, in practice, nearly all the content on them is illegal. The only safe way to use them legally is to be sure you are sharing materials that are not protected by someone else's copyright, although most material is copyrighted. If your child is making a Youtube video and wants to put music behind it, it is important they search for "royalty free music" or "creative commons music" which are free, but usually states that you must acknowledge the source of the music. Some content is free and exists in the public domain, which means the exclusive intellectual property rights have expired or the original creator has given permission for the content to be enjoyed for free. Examples include the works of Beethoven, or the works of Shakespeare. Intellectual property rights are country dependent, and material that is in the public domain in one country, may not be in a different country so it is important to check. Some content is marked with a Creative Commons license that clearly explains how it can or cannot be used by others.

Downloading

Staying Safe And Responsible:

Illegal file-sharing programmes and websites pose greater risks to your computer or mobile phone than legitimate sites. Users often unwittingly download viruses or spyware and can inadvertently share personal computer files and information. Some files are purposely misnamed on file-sharing and peer-to-peer networks to trick people into downloading them.

Top Tips:

- Are you aware of how your children are using their devices to access music, film and TV? Talk to your children about their online activities so that they understand why it's important to use legal sites online.

- Speak also about the moral issues – if you are getting something for free that you know you should pay for – is that right? It is also worth discussing with them what the consequences would be for the whole family if they were caught breaking the law, as it is usually the bill payer in the house who receives a caution if your internet service provider (ISP) suspects a household of illegal downloading.

- If you are unsure of a certain site, visit Get it Right from a Genuine Sitewhich lists the legal ways you can download film and music.

Talking About: Online Pornography

Young people can encounter sexual images both online and offline. This can influence how they think about sex, relationships and their own body image – and it can make children feel confused, embarrassed or worried.

It's important that we talk to children about the sexualised content they see, including online pornography, to help them interpret and critique this information and to help them develop healthy and positive attitudes towards sex, relationships and their own body.

Parental control tools and filters can help to reduce the chances of stumbling across pornography online, but it's important that we give young people the most important filter – inside their head – to help them understand the world they live in.

Online Pornography

Issues To Be Aware Of:

Understand the law

While most pornography is legal, there are some categories of pornography that are illegal, for example child abuse images, and pornography that involves animals and extreme violence.

Your child might stumble across this, seek it out, or they may have been shown it by a friend.

It is important to help your teen understand what types of pornography are illegal, and make sure they know how to report anything. Explain that watching this content can have serious consequences, for example, you can be arrested or prevented from working with children.

- Report illegal pornography to the IWF: www.iwf.org.uk/report

- If you are worried that your child may be accessing illegal pornography you can contact the Stop It Now helpline.

Online Pornography

Issues To Be Aware Of:

Age Verification

Under the Digital Economy Act 2017, all online commercial pornography services accessible from the UK will be required to carry age-verification tools to prevent children from seeing content which isn't appropriate for them.

Key facts:

- All commercial pornography sites must use age-verification software of some kind to establish that the user is over the age of 18 and block under 18s from accessing their content

- Internet service providers will be forced to block any websites that do not comply

- The British Board of Film and Classification (BBFC), will oversee the implementation of the regulations. See more information by visiting the BBFC website.

Online Pornography

Issues To Be Aware Of:

Pornography Addiction

Viewing pornography can be a compulsive behaviour, and because of the pleasure and reward associated with it, it can be difficult to break the habit, much like with gambling or substance abuse.

If you have concerns that your child's access to pornography is having a negative impact on their life, then you can speak to your GP and help reduce exposure to pornography by establishing some family rules. For example, you could decide that your family will not use technology alone. This may be that your child needs to be in a family room, or leave their bedroom door open.

Talking About: Apps

Expiring content is content that disappears after it has been viewed or that is only available for a certain amount of time.

Children and young people are growing up in a digital world where services such as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat all have features which allow users to post things that will eventually expire. It can be in many different forms and it's important to recognise that expiring content is a way of messaging and sharing photos that many young people use every day.

Apps

How Do I Know if an app is appropriate for my child?

Illegal file-sharing programmes and websites pose greater risks to your computer or mobile phone than legitimate sites. Users often unwittingly download viruses or spyware and can inadvertently share personal computer files and information. Some files are purposely misnamed on file-sharing and peer-to-peer networks to trick people into downloading them.

Can I Check If An App Is Age-Appropriate?

It is worth checking the age ratings on apps, where available. For Google Play and Windows Store, apps are rated through the PEGI system. On other app stores such as Apple's App Store and the Amazon App store, app developers provide these age ratings and they are not generally independently rated. You can also look at app reviews online. For example, Common Sense Media's rating system relies on developmental criteria to determine what content is appropriate for which ages.

Apps

How Can I Make Sure Apps Are Safe?

It is possible for apps to contain viruses and some smartphones are more prone to malicious apps. Smartphones run on an operating system (much like a computer), the three main ones are Google Android, Apple iOS and Microsoft Windows Phone. Apple and Microsoft approve every app that gets to their store so there is some degree of quality control. Android phones use software that allows developers to produce and upload any app. It is always worth reading reviews of the app on the relevant app store to check that other users have not had problems with it. Installing anti-virus software on your device can also help.

What Is In-App Purchasing?

While many apps are free, sometimes you may also decide to pay for apps, which commonly cost around 99p to £2.99, (though some can cost more). In-app purchases are not always obvious; you may have downloaded a free game app, but then to upgrade to the next level you are asked to make an "in-app purchase". By doing this you will be asked to pay an additional sum of money, which is charged to the credit card or other payment method you have put on the account. Do be careful, as it can be easy for you or your children to get carried away while playing and run up huge bills by not being aware of the mounting cost.

Talking About: Reliability Online

There is a large amount of content available online, so it can be challenging sifting through it and working out what is accurate and useful.

Being a critical thinker doesn't mean rejecting all the information you find. Instead, it means pausing, thinking twice and not accepting the things you see and hear online immediately and at face value.

Reliability Online

What Is Critical Thinking?

Young people should be reminded to think carefully about the information they are presented with. They should consider its source, compare it with what they already know to be true, ask questions, form judgements and check with others if they are unclear.

What Are The Issues?

Critical thinking includes a whole range of skills which are important when assessing the reliability of the information we come across online. Click on the examples below to learn more about some of the types of inaccurate or unreliable information which can be found online, and that critical thinking can help to address.

Reliability Online

Fake News

Appearing across almost all online platforms, from social media to games to web browsers, online advertising uses lots of different tactics to encourage clicks – including interactive games and puzzles, clickbait style headings, or tricky-to-spot sponsored content from social media celebrities and influencers. They all have the same purpose though – to encourage users to spend money.

Clickbait

This refers to eye-catching headlines or titles designed to get users' attention and clicks, clickbait generally under-delivers on a user's expectations. Articles or videos may be about a completely different topic to what the title suggested. Wording like "You won't believe…" may be followed by predictable or sparse content.

Advertising

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Reliability Online

Conspiracy Theories

Whilst not a new phenomenon, conspiracy theories have certainly found a bigger platform and susceptible audience online. Often spread unofficially through social media channels or online discussion forums, popular conspiracy theories implicate powerful people and organisations in secret plots supposedly behind real-world events.

Deep Fakes

Most famous for their use to create fake celebrity pornography videos, deepfake techniques use increasingly advanced methods to superimpose existing photos and videos over a different photo or video. This can result in surprisingly convincing footage of people or actions that never actually happened.

Reliability Online

Scams And Phishing

Whether it's a deliberately misleading sales listing, such as fake tickets, or an email trying to steal your login or bank details, scams and phishing attempts generally rely on online users submitting their details with the faith that they'll get something in return. Sophisticated fraudsters and phishing attempts often rely on emails, webpages or messages which appear to be from trustworthy sources, making spotting fakes an important skill!

Photos

It's no longer as simple as seeing is believing. Photo editing software is increasingly sophisticated and readily available. Whether looking at photos or videos on social media, or across other platforms, it's important to consider the possibility that the image shown is not necessarily an accurate portrayal of reality.

Fake News

2017's word of the year, "fake news" is a broad term which originally referred to false, often sensational information spread under the guise of news reporting. It's increasingly accepted that 'fake news' is more of an umbrella term, and can refer to deliberate lies, partially untrue or biased stories, propaganda or even satire.

Reliability Online

Top Tips

Explore The Internet Together

Talk about what you come across online, asking questions like "What do you think about this?" or "Does that sound right to you?"

Consider The Source

Where has the information come from? Do we have reason to trust it? Has it come from an expert or has it come from someone who has something to gain by getting us to believe it?

Consider Prior Knowledge

What do we already know about this subject? Does our knowledge match what we're seeing online? Do we know enough to say whether it is reliable or not? Consider doing further research.

Reliability Online

Top Tips

### Take Action Against Unreliable Information

When you find something inaccurate, don't spread it further. Instead, report it.

Trust Your Instincts But Get Help If You Need It

If you think something doesn't look right then trust your instincts and question it further. Remember there are plenty of people and places you can go to for help.

Talking About: Keeping Under 5's Safe Online

Children of all ages enjoy using technology. We now see young children going online to play games, talk to family, watch videos and even learn to use voice enabled tech like Alexa and Siri to find out about their world.
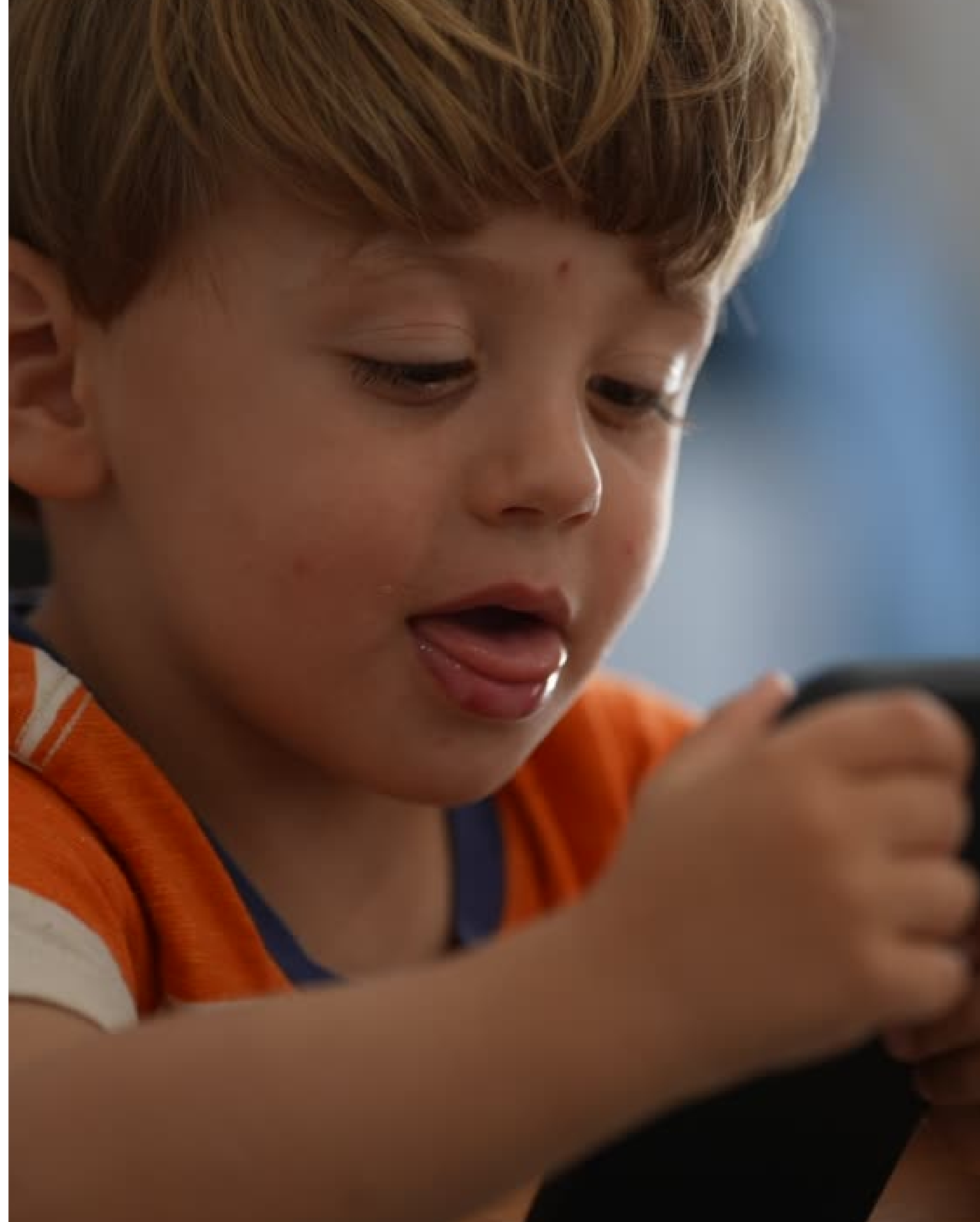
Keeping Under 5's Safe Online

Top Tips

Enjoy Going Online Together

The best way to keep your family safe online, and to understand your child's internet use, is to use technology and the internet together. Get to know how a game or device works by exploring it as a family and finding where the main settings and safety features are.

Establish Clear Boundaries

In the same way that you set boundaries for most areas of your children's lives, establish your expectations with technology use and online activities. Creating a family agreement is a useful step, which might include time spent online, where and when devices can be used and what to do if they see something upsetting.

Supervise Your Child's Use

We recommend that you always supervise a young child when they are online as they may stumble across something which could worry, upset or confuse them. Since the internet can be accessed from a number of devices and many of these are portable, we would advise you to keep family and child devices in a busy part of your home e.g. the living room or kitchen. This makes it easier for you to be involved in their technology use and you are right there to answer any questions and help them.

Keeping Under 5's Safe Online

Top Tips

Consider The Quality And Quantity Of Online Activities

Young children can be enthusiastic users of technology but try to encourage a healthy mix of online and offline activities. There are some strategies that can be used to help manage the time your child spends online, such as setting time limits or using time limiting tools, designating weekly times to use the internet together, or removing portable devices from your child's bedroom at night to avoid tiredness.

Make Use Of Parental Tools

Make use of parental controls and filters which can be used on your home internet,devices, phone networks and online services such as Netflix and YouTube. More information about this can be found in our Parental Controls section

Keeping Under 5's Safe Online

Top Tips

Start The Conversation Early

It's important to begin the conversation about staying safe online as early as possible in order to establish positive behaviour and routines early in a child's life. The age that you should begin speaking to your child will differ between families but essentially as they start engaging with technology and the internet these conversations can and should begin. Try using the conversation starters below to help you with this. You can also give your child strategies early on that they can use if something ever worries or upsets them online. These could include: switch the screen off, close the laptop, exit the website, or turn the iPad or phone over and come ask for help.

Choose age appropriate apps and games

Gaming may be the very first way that your child encounters life online and there are lots of fantastic online games and apps to support their learning and development. When choosing a new game or app for your child the first thing to be aware of is the age rating. Many games also offer in-app purchases which means spending real money on in-game features. You can turn off in-app purchases and protect them with a password.

Keeping Under 5's Safe Online

Top Tips

Know Where To Report

Reports can be made to websites through their safety/help centres and moderation services. If you are worried or suspicious about someone who contacts your child online report them to CEOP (www.ceop.police.uk).

Talking About: Parental Controls

Parental controls are designed to help protect children from inappropriate content online, such as pornography or other adult content.

These controls can be used in a number of ways, e.g. to help ensure that your children access only age-appropriate content, to set usage times and to monitor activity.

Parental Controls

Where Can I Find Them?

Internet Provider

You can set up filters to help block access to inappropriate content on any device that connects to your home WiFi.

Mobile Operator

Filters are often automatically set up on mobile contracts, especially if the user is under the age of 18, but you can double-check with your provider.

Devices

Many devices have parental control settings, for example, to help restrict spending in apps, reduce screentime, or disable location functions.

Online Services

Sites like BBC iPlayer and YouTube have parental control settings to help restrict access to inappropriate content.

Parental Controls

Where Do I Begin?

Decide What's Right For Your Family

When it comes to your family's technology use, it's important that you involve yourself in your child's online world, so as a simple starting point you could ask them what their favourite websites / games are, and why they like them. The filtering options that you put in place may also change over time, as your children get older and more independent, and their technology use changes too. If appropriate, these could be reviewed as a family, and form part of your agreement.

Check Your Settings Regularly

As children grow up, they can become accomplished users of technology and may learn how to disable or bypass the parental controls in place. Talk to your children from the outset about why the settings are there, and the importance of respecting them. Regularly checking the filtering on your family's devices could also form part of your agreement.

Parental Controls

Where Do I Begin?

Give Your Children The Skills They Need

It's worth being aware that no parental controls or filtering options are guaranteed to be 100% effective. They are a very useful tool to improve the quality of your online experiences but, because they cannot offer a 'complete' solution, it is essential to talk with your children about their online activities – so they know what to do if they encounter inappropriate content. Giving your child age-appropriate strategies to deal with this will be very beneficial to them – e.g. from simply turning over the tablet / phone and going to get an adult, to making a report online using official reporting channels.

Understand The Limitations

If you have parental controls from your internet provider on your home WiFi, these will not cover the use of 3G, 4G or 5G at home. Similarly, if your child goes to a friend's house where there are no controls in place, they may be able to access unrestricted content. For these reasons, it's important to educate your child about the potential risks online, and establish rules concerning the sites that are suitable, or inappropriate, to visit. Honest and open conversations are key, so working together to create a 'safe' envoriment at home where your child knows they can open up to you

Talking About: Digital Wellbeing

Young people are growing up in a world where technology has always been present for them, which can have a positive and negative impact on their lives.

Digital wellbeing is about how the internet and technology can make us feel. This includes recognising the impact being online can have on:

- Our emotions,
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Physical health and wellbeing.

Digital Wellbeing

Technology and the internet should be there to enhance and simplify our lives rather than be a cause of distraction, worry or upset.

However, not all online experiences are positive for young people, and this can have a negative impact on how they feel about themselves, their friendships and relationships and even how they see the wider world.

What Impacts Digital Wellbeing?

Any negative online experience could impact a young person's digital wellbeing, but there are some issues that young people tell us are more likely to shape how going online makes them feel.

Digital Wellbeing

What Impacts Digital Wellbeing?

Digital Drama

Falling outs and disagreements within friendships and relationships can often be seen as part of growing up but when these occur online they can become more complicated. The ambiguity of the internet and the fact that we cannot see someone's facial expression or hear their tone of voice can mean that messages and posts are misunderstood.

Desire To 'Fit In'

This could be pressure to look a certain way, recieve a large number of likes or follows or even pressure to watch and engage with content they may not be comfortable with. For example, on social media young people may encounter highly edited images which portray an aspirational look or lifestyle which are often refered to as 'goals'. The pressure to conform to these 'goals' could leave a young person feeling negatively about themselves and their achievements.

Digital Wellbeing

What Impacts Digital Wellbeing?

Distressing Content

Unfortunately, not all online content is positive and some can have a worrying impact on the digital wellbeing of young people. This content could include upsetting news stories, adult websites like pornography or gambling, discriminatory content or messages or content which promotes self harm or eating disorders. Depending upon the nature of what they have seen sometimes it can be difficult for a young person to reach out for help in understanding what they have seen for fear of judgement or embarrassment.

Screen Time And Healthy Balance

It is likely that young people may engage with technology and the internet for extended periods of time every day/ week. This extended use of the internet has been reported to leave young people more likely to worry about how long they are spending online and what they have seen. It has also been linked to a sense of loneliness amoungst young people. When it comes to using technology and the internet it all comes down to quality and not quantity, meaning that we should focus on making our use purposeful, and strike a healthy balance between online and offline experiences.

Digital Wellbeing

Top Tips

▶ Talk about how going online can impact our emotions - Make this a regular habit and try to check-in with young people after they've spent time on their devices.

▶ Use wellbeing tools - For example, lots of devices and platforms offer tools to support digital wellbeing. You may also be able to turn off notifications for apps or use 'mute' or 'do not disturb' modes.

▶ Model healthy behaviour, set boundaries and routines - It is important that young people see adults using technology in a healthy way so model this in your own behaviour.

▶ Sign post to appropriate support - It's important that young people know who they can turn to for support, whether this is a trusted adult at home or school or by contacting a helpline.

▶ Stay informed - It's also important that you know what to do or where to go for help if ever your child does need help with something that is worrying or upsetting them online.

Reporting, Help And Advice

▶ Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP) - A police agency tackling child sexual abuse and online grooming. Their two websites include an online reporting tool and advice and activities for parents and children. To make a report: ceop.police.uk

▶ Internet Watch Foundation (Part of UK Safer Internet Centre) - The IWF work to remove online images and videos of child sexual abuse. Their online reporting tool can be used to anonymously report criminal content of this kind. iwf.org.uk

▶ Report Harmful Content Online (Part of UK Safer Internet Centre) - Advice on how to respond to harmful content online, this tool also allows visitors to query inadequate reporting responses from other services. reportharmfulcontent.com

▶ True Vision - Information about hate crime and incidents and advice on how to report it in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. report-it.org.uk

Reporting, Help And Advice

▶ Get It Right From A Genuine Site - Find out which sites are legal for streaming and downloading films, music & games. getitrightfromagenuinesite.org

▶ Phone Brain - Information about paid for services such as premium rate numbers and in-app purchases. phonebrain.org.uk

▶ Ask About Games- Advice and online guides about gaming and PEGI age ratings. askaboutgames.com

▶ Young Minds - Free, confidential, expert advice on how to support young people's mental health & wellbeing. 0808 802 5544 youngminds.org.uk

Reporting, Help And Advice

▶▶ Net Aware - Online guide with up-to-date advice and parents' views on popular apps, games and online platforms.

▶▶ Common Sense Media - Expert reviews, advice and age appropriate recommendations on games, apps, films and more.

▶▶ Internet Matters - Step-by-step guides for using parental controls and privacy settings alongside support on a range of online safety topics.

▶▶ NSPCC - Free support and advice for adults concerned about the safety or wellbeing of a child. 0808 800 5000 nspcc.org.uk

▶▶ Family Lives- Free, professional, non- judgmental support and advice. 0808 800 2222 familylives.org.uk