

Keeping Safe Online

It is important that we educate our children (age appropriately) on the risks of the internet.

Remind children:

- Not to share any of their information online
- Only talk to friends/people that you know in real life and would say "hello" to in the street.
- Be kind to others online. When words are written down they can be taken in a variety of different ways by the reader.
- If children see online content that upsets them, they should be encouraged to turn it off immediately then report it to an adult.
- Remind children not to believe everything they see/hear online, and to question anything with an adult.



Social Networks

These are a great tool for communicating with friends and family, however it is important to remember that not everything you see on social media is true/accurate. Children should **not accept requests from people they do not know**. Children should be cautious before posting anything online, and **never post personal details** to a public forum. It is important to **uphold a positive online reputation** as the internet does not forget, and future employers will often research a person online. Social network platforms include Facebook and Instagram, which do have a minimum age of 13 to use them. Ensure privacy settings on the platform protect your child.



Cyberbullying

This is bullying that happens online. It can happen via messaging/social media/gaming and it follows the child wherever they go. It can be devastating.

If you feel your child is being bullied it is important to try and talk to them about it, and offer them information of who can help them (school, family). They may be reluctant to talk. If they are willing take screenshots as evidence. If the bullying is via gaming/social media you can also report the comments to the platform (e.g. Facebook).

It is important to remind children to **never write/put anything online that they wouldn't be happy with you seeing**. This is a good benchmark and will help prevent them being accused of cyber bullying. Remind them to be kind and courteous online.

Sexting

This is when children share sexual/naked/semi naked images/videos or sexually explicit messages. **It is illegal for children to take/share/posses/download an explicit image.**

If your child has shared an image get them to talk to the person they sent it to and ask them to delete it. If an image has been re-posted online you need to report it to the platform (e.g. Facebook). It also needs reporting to school or the police.

It is important to have those open and honest conversations with your child and remind them not to share anything with anyone that they wouldn't be happy with you seeing. If your child comes to you with an issue remain calm and do not threaten to remove their phone.

Children and Technology:
For parents of secondary school aged children.



Inclusion Service– Outreach Team



'The Amazing Everyday'

Technology

Children (and adults) use a variety of devices for a huge range of things:

- online gaming
- watching videos/films
- social networking
- homework
- playing apps/games
- communicating with friends and family

The internet can be a fantastic resource, but it can also be a world of misery for children and adults alike.

The Effect of Technology

Sleep: The blue light of screens stops the natural chemical, Melatonin, from being released into the body. This chemical is responsible for allowing us to drift into natural sleep. If this chemical isn't released we will find it harder to go to sleep.

It is suggested that children do not access screens an hour before bed.

The Brain: Using a device for more than 25 minutes can release a feel-good chemical called Dopamine into the brain. The brain then learns that using a device has this feel-good effect. This then creates an addiction. More and more children and adults are becoming addicted to their devices. *Addiction is a scary word, however it is appropriate as it refers to the feel-good effect that children and adults get from device use.*

Behaviour: As with any addiction this can lead to changes in behaviour. Mood swings, reluctance to come away from the device, anxiety when they cannot find their device— an inability to function without it. *Reducing screen time will help with the behaviour. When putting in rules/boundaries around device use, children*

are likely to find this difficult to begin with. Persevere in a consistent way.



Ideas for Overcoming Challenges

- **Set a good example.** As parents we are often just as guilty of scrolling through our phone/tablet of an evening. This gives a conflicting message to children.
- **Have a set of family rules.** This is for every family member to follow. This could be having screen free zones (e.g. bedroom), or times (e.g. no screens an hour before bed). Consider turning off some notifications to reduce that reaction to the beep.
- Consider **turning the router off** at a certain time to stop internet access after that time.
- **Parental control** tools are key to ensure children are kept safe online. www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/
- Ensure the **Broadband filter settings** are set high enough to limit access to inappropriate content.
- **Turn off auto-play.** This stops the next video automatically loading.
- **Talk openly** about the internet at home. Encourage children to talk about their games etc. Create an environment of openness.
- **Encourage critical thinking.** The internet isn't always a reliable place for information. Encourage children to challenge anything they see on internet.
- Check the **Age-rating** on games children are

playing. These are designed to protect children. You do not have to let them play an inappropriate game just because their friends play it.

- **Encourage activities that are not orientated around a device.**
- Different devices have different ways of setting **screen time limits**. Consider activating or installing an app to monitor screen time for the family.
- Parent child **communication** is KEY. Have those **open and honest discussions** around what apps are appropriate and don't be afraid to have those difficult conversations. Reassure them that you won't overreact if they tell you something, and that you are just trying to keep them safe.
- **Be aware** that there are many apps that allow children to potentially communicate with strangers. Some apps can give out your location too so **monitor app usage**.
- **Be aware** that mobile data and Wi-Fi hotspots may not filter inappropriate content out.

Coming off of a device

If you find yourself being ignored when asking your child to come away from their device try **sliding into their game/activity** to help them to come away. You can do this by asking them a question about their game or saying something positive about what they are doing. This will gently encourage interaction and allow an easier transition off of a device.

