

SAFER INTERNET DAY 6th February 2024

Inspiring change? Making a difference, managing influence and navigating change online.

Help and advice for you as a parent or carer

Safer Internet Day is a great opportunity to focus on online safety with your child, whatever their age. This year's theme is all about change and influence online. Below we look to answer some of the key questions you may have this Safer Internet Day. We hope they help you talk about these issues and ideas with your child, no matter how much time you have and in an age-appropriate way.

"Things change so fast online, it's hard to keep up with what my child is doing"

Staying up to date with what children are doing online can feel like a challenge sometimes. However, you don't have to be an expert in every new app or service. Simply having conversations with your children about their lives online, and what to do if they need help or something goes wrong, is what's most important. Here are a few simple steps you can take to help bridge the gap.

❖ **Talk little and often**

Having a regular open dialogue with your children about their favourite apps, the games they enjoy, and their online friends, will help create an environment where chatting about online experiences becomes a normal part of family life.

❖ **Stay proactive**

As a result of discussions with your children about their online activities, take time to research the apps they're using, the accounts or channels they're following, and the games they're playing, to get a better idea of what they're experiencing and what your thoughts are towards it.

❖ **Seek support**

Knowing where to get help is essential. Each app or platform will have its own safety guidelines and reporting features, and having knowledge of how to use these will ensure you can make a report, seek help, and support your child to get the best out of the services they're using.

“My child is asking for a new device and I’m not sure they’re ready for one”

It’s important to think carefully before getting any kind of device for your child. Not only can it be an expensive decision, it’s also necessary to consider the 5 ‘Ws’:

❖ What kind of device is it and what level of connectivity does it offer?

Does the device allow you to connect with friends, online friends, and other people you might not know?

❖ Who will be using it?

Will it be a family owned device, or just for your child? If it’s a personal device then it’s important that you’re aware of the in-built settings that are available, such as the content and privacy restrictions that can help to control things like age ratings, location sharing, downloading, and screentime etc.

❖ When and where will the device be used?

Is it portable, or will it stay in one place in the home? Will it go into your child’s bedroom, or will they take it out and about with them? Creating a ‘Family Agreement’ (see attachment) for your technology use can help set out your rules and expectations.

❖ Why does your child want one?

Is this an upgrade to an existing device that might be past its best, or are they asking because, ‘all their friends have one!’? As a parent or carer, it can be difficult to explain the cost of new devices and relay your concerns in a child-friendly way. If your child is asking for their first phone, then Childnet’s ‘First Phone Checklist’ (attached) has all the advice you need to make an informed decision.

Remember, even if your child is putting pressure on you, as their parent or carer only you know if they’re ready to use the device they’re asking for, and if they can demonstrate the responsibility and maturity needed to enjoy it safely.

“My child is keen to share content and make a change online. How can I help them achieve this safely?”

Lots of young people are turning to the internet to talk about issues they’re passionate about, to help raise awareness, and promote social change. Creating and sharing content online can be exciting, even more so if it reaches lots of people. However, it’s important that young people consider the messaging and language of their posts, and how it might reflect on them.

❖ Check regularly

A young person’s opinions and values might change over time, and the internet never forgets! Encourage young people to regularly check their accounts and delete old posts that they no longer want to share.

❖ Know your audience

Ask your child if they know what privacy options are available, if they're happy with the settings they currently have, and offer help if needed. Knowing who can see your posts helps to keep track of how widely things are being shared.

❖ **Be positive**

Content posted privately can still be shared further than a young person expects, for example by screenshots being taken. However, if the content is positive and supports a worthy cause then social media platforms can be a great way for young people to be part of supportive online communities with like-minded people.

How to make a report online

It's important to know how to make a report, so that you know where to go and what to do if your child is upset or worried about something they've seen online.

There are many places you can go to report and get help for yourself and your child, as well as receive ongoing support and reassurance from experts.

Here are some best practice tips for parents and carers, followed by a list of places to turn to:

❖ **Know when to report**

If you or your child has seen something online that is illegal, upsetting or harmful, then it is always best to report it.

❖ **Report to the correct place**

Depending on the content, reports need to go to specific places for the correct support. See below for a list.

❖ **Understand community guidelines**

Many online platforms will have their own community guidelines when it comes to harmful online content. Familiarise yourself with the platform being used, so you know when the community guidelines are violated and when to make a report.

❖ **Encourage reporting**

Ignoring a piece of harmful online content can lead towards others experiencing this type of harm. Encourage discussion around the importance of children and young people reporting upsetting content to a parent, carer, or trusted adult.

Where you can report to:

You can go to Report Harmful Content to find out how to report across some of the most well-known social media sites and other popular online platforms.

If you believe that a platform's community guidelines have been violated but your report was rejected, you can head to Report Harmful Content for further escalation and review.

<https://reportharmfulcontent.com/report/>

For further information on Safer Internet Day and keeping children safe online, head to:

<https://saferinternet.org.uk/safer-internet-day/safer-internet-day-2024>