What can parents/carers do to help children keep safe online?

Follow the Golden Rules

Ground Rules

- Discuss together as a family how the internet will be used in your house. Consider what information should be kept private (such as personal information, photos in school uniform etc) and decide rules for making and meeting online friends. Ensure your children know the risks of accepting friends' requests from strangers online and make sure you know what your child is doing online much like you would offline. Make sure your child uses strong passwords to protect their online accounts. It is important they know they need to keep their passwords safe and not share them with anyone or use the same password for several accounts.
- Consider locating your child's computers and laptops in a family area but be aware that children access the internet on mobile phones, games consoles and tablets so use can't always be supervised.
- Be especially aware of settings rules relating to your child's use of webcams and any applications or devices which allow voice or video chat. Childnet have useful information for young people about using webcams safely www.childnet.com/young-people/secondary/hot-topics/video-chat-and-webcams

Online Safety

- Install antivirus software, secure your internet connection and use Parental Control functions for computers, mobile phones and games consoles to block unsuitable content or contact from unknown people. Research different parental control software and tools available for your home and select the tools which are most suitable to you, your child and the technology in your home. Visit www.internetmatters.org and www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-and-resources/a-parents-guide for safety information and advice about parental controls on consoles and devices and how to report concerns.
- Make sure you read any parental guidance and safety recommendations (including age requirements – most popular social networking sites and apps are only for users aged 13+) for any apps or websites before allowing your child to use them - visit www.net-aware.org.uk
- Always remember that parental control tools are not always 100% effective and sometimes unsuitable content can get past them, so don't rely on them alone to protect your child.

Listen

- Take an active interest in your child's life online and talk openly with them about the things they do. Talk to your child and ask them to show or even teach you how they use the internet, learn which websites or tools they like to use and why. Learning together with your child can often open opportunities to discuss safe behaviour online.
- To start a conversation with your child you could tell them that you understand that some young people share images and videos online and that you're interested to know what they think about it and how they think they can keep themselves safe.

Dialogue – keep talking

- Ensure that your child knows that once a picture, video or comment is sent or posted online, then it can be very difficult to remove as other people can forward it and share it with others, without them even knowing.
- www.childnet.com and www.thinkuknow.co.uk has some really useful tips and ideas for parents/carers about starting conversations about online safety
- Always ensure your child knows how to report and block people online who may send nasty or inappropriate messages or content. Encourage your child not to retaliate or reply to cyberbullying and to keep any evidence.
- Make sure your child knows it's important that they tell an adult they trust if anything happens online that makes them feel scared, worried or uncomfortable.

Remember, the internet is an essential part of young people's lives and provides them with tremendous opportunities. The vast majority use it without coming to any harm so it's essential to be realistic: banning the internet or web sites often will not work and it can make a child feel less able to report a problem or concern, so education around safe use is essential.

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