

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO E-SAFETY



PENKETH HIGH SCHOOL





This document is based very closely on the Parent/ Carer section of the 'ThinkuKnow' website administered by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/Secondary

We believe that this summary provides a good overview of the guidance on the website. CEOP have given permission for us to use their resources in this way.

The sections below correspond exactly to the sections of the website. If you 'Control-click' the 'hyperlinks' you will be taken directly to the relevant resources.

1. What is my child doing online?
2. How do I talk to my child about what they are doing online?
3. What risks might my child face?
4. What tools are there to keep my child safe?
5. Talk to your child about- webcams.

TOP TIPS

- **Be involved in your child's online life.** For many of today's young people there is no line between the online and offline worlds. Young people use the internet to socialise and grow and, just as you guide and support them offline, you should be there for them online too. Talk to them about what they're doing, if they know you understand they are more likely to approach you if they need support. [Tips on how to discuss tricky issues with your child](#)
- **Watch Thinkuknow films to learn more.** The ThinkuKnow programme has [films and advice for children](#) from five all the way to 16. Your child may have seen these at school, but they can also be a good tool for you to find out more about what young people do online and some of the potential risks.
- **Keep up-to-date with your child's development online.** Be inquisitive and interested in the new gadgets and sites that your child is using. It's important that as your child learns more, so do you.
- **Set boundaries in the online world just as you would in the real world.** Think about what they might see, what they share, who they talk to and how long they spend online. It is important to continue to discuss boundaries so that they evolve as your child's use of technology does.
- **Know what connects to the internet and how.** Nowadays even the TV connects to the internet. Your child will use all sorts of devices and gadgets; make sure you're aware of which ones can connect to the internet, such as their phone or games console. Also, find out how they are accessing the internet – is it your connection or a neighbour's Wifi? This will affect whether your safety settings are being applied.
- **Consider the use of parental controls on devices that link to the internet, such as the TV, laptops, computers, games consoles and mobile phones.** Parental controls are not just about locking and blocking, they are a tool to help you set appropriate boundaries as your child grows and develops. They are not the answer to your child's online safety, but they are a good start and are not as difficult to install as you might think. Service providers are working hard to make them simple, effective and user friendly. [Find your service provider and learn how to set your controls](#)
- **Emphasise that not everyone is who they say they are.** Make sure your child knows never to meet up with someone they only know online. People might not always be who they say they are. Make sure your child understands that they should never meet up with anyone they only know online without taking a trusted adult with them.
- **Know what to do if something goes wrong.** Just as in the offline world, you want to help your child when they need it. Therefore, it is important to know when and how to report any problem. [What tools are there to help me keep my child safe?](#)



If you have a child who is in, or is due to start, primary school, read the [primary school](#) advice to find out what you can do to support them.



1. WHAT IS MY CHILD DOING ONLINE?

a. SOCIALISING

Your child will be using services online to create a network of 'friends'. Social networking sites, like Facebook, encourage and enable your child to link with their friends so they can chat, keep up to date, share photos and videos... and their opinions of them!

Almost every site online now has a social element. Whether it is finding out what music your friends are buying, to reading their reviews of the latest films or games, increasingly we see the internet through the eyes of our friends.

To young people, their idea of an online 'friend' may be different to an offline 'friend'. Friends online might be your best mate, your entire school, friends of friends, people you meet gaming, or even just someone with a funny profile. Therefore, online 'friends' are likely to be a much larger group than friends in the real world.

Making someone your 'friend' gives them access to things you share – that could be; what you like, who you like and even where you live...Therefore, the larger the group of friends, the more people can see things about you. As you might expect, this can be risky.

Here are four things you should discuss with your child to help them protect themselves when socialising online:

Know who your friends are. Because 'friends' have access to their personal information and can chat to them, your children should only be friends with people that they trust. Talk to your child about who their 'friends' are, encourage them to think about where and when they 'met' people and whether it is appropriate to share information with them.

Manage the information you share with them. On most sites, children can control the amount of information they share with different groups of friends. For example, you might share some holiday snaps just with your family, or create a private invitation to a party. Your child should only share personal information, like their telephone number or school, with people they know and trust in the real world.

Never meet up with someone you only know online. People might not always be who they say they are. Make sure your child understands that they should never meet up with anyone they only know online without taking a trusted adult with them.

Know what to do if someone upsets you. Sometimes 'friends' can do things that are upsetting, it's important that you and your child are aware of what you can do to block or report this.

[My child is under 13, should they have a Facebook account?](#)

To comply with different legislation, Facebook and many other social networking sites, require users to be 13 and over in order to set-up an account.

However, we do know that increasing numbers of children are registering on sites like Facebook, by claiming to be older than they are.

Sites like Facebook enable children to share an incredible amount of information about themselves, have conversations with their friends and also potentially provide contact with people they don't know. With this in mind, you should take the age restriction as seriously as you would an age restriction for the cinema.

We understand however that it can be difficult to stop a child from registering to sites like this and that you can be concerned that they might set it up behind your back. We believe you should be involved in your child's life online, and it is better that they use a site safely with your involvement, than hide their behaviour from you.

If your child is setting up a Facebook account, consider the following:

- Help them set up their account – make sure that they don't put any unnecessary personal information.
- Don't make them any older than 13. [Facebook have separate security settings in place for younger users](#)



- Use your email address as the main contact – this way you can see the people who are ‘friending’, messaging and commenting on your child’s profile.
- Talk through the privacy settings – go through the settings step-by-step.
- Set privacy settings to ‘friends only’ and ensure that the friends they have are ones they know and trust in the real world.
- Limit the amount of adult ‘friends’ they have – these could be friends of yours or family members. These users may post content which you would not want your child to see!
- Talk to them about some of the things that can go wrong – such as bullying, unwanted contact and inappropriate content.
- Ask them to talk to you about anything that makes them feel unhappy.
- Learn how to [report](#) any issues directly to the site.

If your child is already an underage user, revisit their profile with them and ensure that these steps have been implemented; it is never too late to take control.

b. GAMING

The internet has changed the way that young people play games. Games can be played against anyone in the world, at any time and for as long as you want.

In the past, computer games were something you played against the computer, or friends that came round to your house. They were also something that you ‘completed’ and then moved onto the next one.

Online, you can adventure in complex worlds, create characters, and meet and make friends to fight battles and go on journeys together...

Almost anything that connects to the internet will allow you to play these games – desktop computers, laptops, consoles, like Playstation or Xbox, or even mobile phones.

Gaming is great fun, but just as with anything online, there are risks you should help your child navigate. It’s important that you’re involved in your child’s experiences, even if it feels like a different world! Here are some simple ways to help your child game safely.

- Check the age rating of the game

Just like with films, you should check the game’s age rating before allowing your child to play. The Pan-European Gaming Information (PEGI) system sets age ratings for games and classify their content according to what is appropriate for different age groups. The rating will help you decide whether the game is suitable for your child. For information on game ratings visit the [PEGI](#) website.

- Talk to them about the games they play

Ask your child what is hot, and what is not! Get them to tell you about the game and, if they can bear it, play against them!

You might want to ask them:

- What they like about it?
- Which of their friends play it?
- Who are their friends in the game?
- To tell you about their character and profile.

It is important to stay up-to-date and regularly ask your children about the games they play and the people they are friends with.

- Look for the game’s advice for parents and carers

When you know the kind of games your child is playing, go on and take a look.

Look to see if the game has advice for parents and carers. This can help you to assess the appropriateness and learn more about the functions of the site. In general, this advice tends to focus on the fun aspects of the game, but it should also highlight the safety



measures the site has in place to protect your child and what you can do as a parent or carer to protect them, such as setting parental controls.

It is important that you read this information and learn how to report any issues directly to the site. This way you can help your child if they need it.

For more information about safe gaming, including setting parental controls on different games consoles, visit the [Association of UK Interactive Entertainment](#) site.

- Know who they're talking to

Most of the popular online games are played by adults and children alike. Therefore, your children need to be aware of the information that they share and the people they talk to.

It's never a good idea to share personal information such as their name, address, email address, passwords, telephone numbers or the name of their school with people they don't know and trust in the real world. Talk to your child about how people can sometimes lie online or pretend to be someone else.

Encourage your child to keep gaming friends 'in the game' and not to invite them to be friends on their social networks.

- Set boundaries

Some online games are virtual worlds which never end, where missions can take hours to complete. It's important to set limits on the amount of time your child spends playing online. Be aware of how long they spend gaming and set rules, as you would for TV. Also, ensure that they take regular screen breaks – at least five minutes every 45-60 minutes.

- Know what to do if something goes wrong

Things can go wrong when gaming, whether that's someone being mean, inappropriate or asking you to do something that you're not comfortable with. It's important that you and your child know what steps you can take in the game to block and report people and how to report and seek support from other services.

c. TALKING TO PEOPLE

Young people use the internet to talk to others in a number of different ways: emailing, instant messaging, webcam and chat rooms. The online world provides young people with the opportunity to be inquisitive, explore relationships and actively seek risks, such as flirting with people that they don't know.

Chatting online feels different to chatting face-to-face. It can be easier to say and reveal things that you wouldn't in the real world, and be mean, aggressive or flirtatious.

It is important for young people to remember that there are offline consequences to online behaviours.

As a parent or carer, you need to understand the ways young people communicate with others, and the potential [risks](#).

Until you feel your child is responsible and mature enough to understand and manage the [risks](#) of communicating with people they do not know, then you should restrict the sites they use and people they talk to. Young people should be aware that they can:

- Block contacts. Most chat sites enable you to block contacts to prevent them from communicating with you.
- Report contacts. If someone is being inappropriate on chat sites, you can often report this directly to the site administrator. However, if your child has experienced sexual or offensive chat that has made them feel uncomfortable or someone is trying to meet up with them, you can report this directly to [CEOP](#).

1. What is instant messaging?

Instant messaging (IM) is instant text chat between two or more people. This tends to be private un-moderated chat. You can build a list of 'friends' or 'buddies' that you can chat to, they can see when you are online and start conversations with you. It is important for



young people to know how to manage this list, for example, blocking contacts they don't want to talk to.

Windows Live Messenger is a popular IM service; however, many sites, including Facebook, provide instant messaging.

2. What is SPIM?

SPIM is unsolicited messages that are sent through instant messaging sites. These could be adverts, scams, viruses or ways to gather your personal information for the purpose of fraud. Often these appear to be real people requesting to chat.

Your child should not click on messages and links from people that they do not know on their instant messaging accounts as they may risk their computer's security.

3. What is webcam chat?

Webcams let you see the person you're talking to while you're chatting. Services like Skype are very popular and free. This can be a great way for young people to chat to each other; however, it is important to remember that what appears on webcam can be recorded and shared with other people in ways that you wouldn't want. Young people should be aware that it is never a good idea to reveal too much of themselves on webcam; this includes engaging in sexual behaviour.

4. What are chat rooms?

A chat room is a forum where groups of people meet to chat online – this can sometimes be about a particular topic, or can be friends meeting to discuss something. Sometimes chat rooms are moderated; this means that someone, or a computer program, is looking out for inappropriate language or behaviour. Some chat rooms, even those aimed at young people, do contain a lot of sexual chat and online flirting. It is important for young people not to engage in sexual chat with people they do not know, or reveal too much about themselves.

5. What is random chat?

These sites connect individuals at random with strangers to enable them to chat, either by text or webcam. The random element of connecting you with someone anywhere in the world is the main appeal of these sites.

This type of site is often un-moderated and frequently used for chat and actions of a highly sexual and inappropriate nature which can be harmful to young people.

We would recommend restricting access to any site which randomly connects users to strangers.

d. Sharing

Most sites your child uses will encourage them to share information about themselves with others. This might be:

- Opinions – such as what they like and don't like
- What they are doing
- Pictures and videos of themselves
- Information about themselves – such as their name and where they live
- Videos and music

The internet is a great tool for sharing information like this and young people love to keep up-to-date with what their friends are doing. However, it is important that they think before they share as there can be [risks with sharing personal information](#).

Once you share information online, you lose control of it. It is important for young people to be aware of the implications of sharing different types of information.

[Pictures and videos](#)



It couldn't be easier to share pictures and videos online. With cameras on every mobile phone, a picture can be posted and shared in an instant. When you can share at the click of a button, there is no time to think whether it is the right thing to do. It's easy to make mistakes. Tell your child not to share anything online that they would be embarrassed to show you.

Young people might be tempted to share pictures of a sexual nature of themselves – this might be with people they trust, like a boyfriend or girlfriend; however, this can easily get out of hand. Watch our film '[Exposed](#)' to find out about some of the consequences and why your child should think before they share.

Personal information

The more information you share about yourself, the easier it is for a stranger to build a picture about you. You should discuss what information your child actually needs to share.

If your child is using social networks, like Facebook, make sure you go through the [privacy settings](#) with them so they can control what they share, and with whom.

Watch the 'ThinkUKnow' film '[Consequences](#)' to find out some of the risks of sharing too much personal information.

Location

Social networking sites increasingly allow you to share your exact location with your friends through your mobile phone. Services like 'Facebook Places' allow you to 'tag' yourself – which pinpoints you on a map and tells your friends where you are.

There are obvious risks with young people sharing this type of information. We recommend that people under 18 turn off this function on any social networks or services that they use.

e. Searching for content

With a world of information at their fingertips, it's easy for young people to actively search for material that might be inappropriate for their age, or stumble across things that might upset or disturb them.

The internet can provide young people with unrestricted access to adult material. At an age where they are developing socially and sexually, it is natural for young people to be inquisitive. The internet can support natural exploration of sex, relationships and identity; however, there is the risk of exposure to material that could be detrimental to their development.

One of the ways to help manage what your child is exposed to online is the use of [parental controls](#). These are a good tool available to you; however, they are not a substitute for talking to your child about what they see online.

Pornography

It is likely that in adolescence your child will be curious about sex. They may well seek to explore this by looking at pornography. Pornography is big business online. It is quick to find, often free and has no age restrictions.

Pornography has always played a part in adolescent sexual development; however, the internet has significantly changed the type of content that young people are accessing. There is no top shelf on the internet and at the point at which young people are developing sexually, they can be exposed to material of an extreme nature – such as degrading, violent and dominating behaviours. This can result in: negative attitudes towards women, dysfunctional sexual attitudes and behaviours and unrealistic expectations of sexual relationships.

Difficult though it may be, you should talk to your child about pornography when you talk to them about sex. Emphasise that sex is part of healthy adult relationships, however, within pornography people are playing a role and the depictions of sex are unrealistic and potentially unhealthy.

If you are concerned about your child's use of pornography you can seek advice from your GP.

The Brook Advisory Service also provide help for under-25's with a range of sexual issues.

0808 802 1234



www.brook.org.uk

Unhealthy networking

You can use the internet to find out about anything you are interested in and meet people interested in the same things, no matter how niche. Although this provides fantastic opportunities, it can also reinforce vulnerabilities. For example, some young people suffering from eating disorders have used the internet to promote these conditions to others as a lifestyle choice. Through these networks young people encourage each other to engage in unhealthy behaviours. This can reinforce their opinions about the illness and make it seem normal.

If you are concerned, visit B-eat www.b-eat.co.uk, who provide information for young people, parents and practitioners.

Extreme opinions

Anyone can create a website, it's easy and even the most extreme view can find an audience. At a time when young people's opinions are being formed, exposure to sites which convey extreme viewpoints may influence their views if not counterbalanced with other perspectives.

Encourage your child to talk to you about the things they read or see online. It's important to help your child understand that, just as national newspapers have their own political perspectives, websites may, and often will, have their own agendas. Just because it is online, it doesn't mean that it is true.

Inaccurate content

A lot of online content has been created by people like you and me. Websites like Wikipedia are written entirely by their users and this provides a great online resource. However, it is important for young people to know that not everything they read online is true. It may be a distorted opinion, or simply factually incorrect. 109% of people know this.

Encourage your child to check facts from other sources and also to think critically about sites they use.

f. Using a mobile phone

Most young people in secondary school own a mobile phone. The devices themselves are becoming ever more powerful and many offer the same functions you might have on a computer. Many mobile phones can now:

- **Access the internet** – this is no different to accessing the internet through a computer. Young people can go on any site that you can find online, including sites like Facebook, YouTube and also potentially age inappropriate sites.
- **Take and share photos and videos** – most phones have a fully functioning camera. Young people can take images and videos and these can be shared quickly, easily and for free through text message, email or uploading to the internet.
- **Chat with instant messaging, video and text** – young people can take part in private chats with people through their mobile phone.
- **Share your location** – through GPS, many phones can now identify their user's location in real time. This can then be shared on social networking sites and through other sites and applications.
- **Play games** – young people can use their mobile to play games and download new ones, sometimes these can come at a cost. See our [playing games section for more advice](#)
- **Add and buy 'apps'** – apps are programs that you can add to your phone that enable you to do a wide range of things, from playing simple games to finding up-to-date train times. Some of these apps have a cost.



With all of these functions available, talking to people is now only a small part of what mobile phones are used for. It can be difficult to keep tabs of what your child is up to on a mobile phone.

How can I help my child use their mobile phone safely?

Parental settings – some mobile phone service providers allow you to set certain controls over your child's phone. This can include blocking access to certain sites and monitoring your child's activities. When buying a mobile, speak to the sales representative to find out more about what services they offer. You can find out more about what controls are available by looking at 'parents' sections online; here are a few to get you started:

- Vodafone - <http://parents.vodafone.com/mobile>
- O2 - <http://www.o2.co.uk/parents>
- T mobile - <http://www.t-mobile.co.uk/help-and-advice/advice-for-parents/>
- Orange - <http://www1.orange.co.uk/safety/>

Loopholes – even if you have set controls, your child may be accessing the internet through other sources. Many phones can access the internet through Wifi, which could be available on your street and picked up for free. Accessing someone else's Wifi may mean that your safety settings no longer apply.

Understand what your child's phone can do – all phones are different and you need to know what they are capable of so you can manage the risks.

Set a pin code on your child's phone – setting a pin code is like a password. Without a password, others may use your child's phone. This could enable them to access personal information, online accounts or run up expensive bills.

Set boundaries and monitor usage – this doesn't mean spying on your child! You can set rules with them about where it is used and how long for. For example, if you don't want your child to use their mobile at night, why not only charge it overnight in the living room?

Discuss what they can share – teach your child to think before they share online and the consequence of doing this over the mobile phone, such as [sharing their location](#).

Discuss and monitor costs – phones can be expensive. As well as bills, costs can be run up through downloading apps, music or leaving data-roaming on abroad. Your child should be made aware of the financial responsibility that comes with owning a phone. There are different ways to manage costs, such having a contract or pay-as-you-go deals; make sure you discuss this in the shop.

Keep their mobile number private – young people need to understand that their phone number should only be given to people they know and trust, make sure that if they are concerned, they ask you first.

Be prepared in case the phone is lost or stolen – know who to contact to get the SIM card blocked. Every phone has a unique 'IMEI' number; make sure you write this down so if the phone is stolen, the police can identify the phone if they find it. You can get this by dialling *#06#.

2. HOW DO I TALK TO MY CHILD ABOUT WHAT THEY'RE UP TO ONLINE?

a. Let them teach you

The people who know best about what your children are up to online, are your children! Get them to tell you about the sites they're using. Ask them questions such as:

- Why do they like the site?
- What can they do on it?
- What's so fun about it?
- Who uses it at school?



- Who you can talk to?
- Who are their friends on it?

This is a good way to develop a trusting relationship with your child about what they are up to online.

b. Reach an agreement

A good way to set boundaries with your child about what they can and can't do online is to create an agreement with them.

Here are some examples of the areas you might want to discuss:

- Limits on the amount of time your child spends online, or playing computer games.
- Having regular screen breaks – at least five minutes every 45-60 minutes.
- Not sharing any pictures they wouldn't be happy to share with you.
- Not giving out personal details, such as mobile phone number and address, to people they don't know and trust.
- Coming to you if they are concerned. Or, if not, knowing where they can go for independent help and support.

You can introduce an agreement after watching one of the [Thinkuknow films](#).

c. Go to the movies

Your child will almost certainly have watched one of our Thinkuknow films at school; they are a great way to start conversations with them about what can happen online and what they can do about it.

The films may also be a good way for you to learn about some of the pressures young people may face, what can go wrong and what you can do about it.

Ask your child if they have seen any of the films below and why not sit down and watch one together and discuss the topics. We would recommend that you watch the film on your own beforehand so that you're aware of the topics it covers.

- Consequences
- Exposed
- Matt Thought He Knew



3. RISKS MY CHILD MIGHT FACE

a. Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place via technology. Whether on gaming sites, through a mobile device or via a social networking site, the effects can be devastating for the young people involved.

With online technologies accessible 24 hours a day, cyberbullying can be relentless. It can also intrude on spaces that were previously personal, for example at home; it can feel that there is no escape from it.

28% of 11 – to 16 year olds have been deliberately targeted, threatened or humiliated by an individual or group through the use of mobile phone or the internet. (Beatbullying, Virtual Violence II.)

What to do if my child is being cyberbullied

- **Offer reassurance and support.** Your child may be in need of emotional support or feel like they have nowhere to turn. It is rare that cyberbullying is only taking place online and is often someone your child knows through school or a group they attend. Their school should have policies and procedures for dealing with cyberbullying. Your child could visit [CyberMentors](http://www.cybermentors.org.uk). This is an online counselling service with a difference; the counsellors are also children and young people. This site has proved very popular and offers practical advice - www.cybermentors.org.uk
- **Tell your child that if they are being bullied to always keep the evidence.** Whether it's a text message or email, tell them not to reply to the bully or delete the comments. Ask your child if they know the bully or where the messages are coming from. Often it is someone within the school environment and can be dealt with quickly and effectively with assistance from the school.
- **Block the bullies.** If someone is bullying your child on a social networking or chat site encourage them to block or delete the individual so that they can't be contacted by them anymore.
- Report any bullying content to the website it's hosted on. If content has been posted, for example a video or image, which is upsetting your child you should report it to the website, for example, Facebook. Learn how you would report content on sites like [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com) and [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com); every site is different. Contacting the website is the only way to get the offensive content removed, unless it is illegal. In cases of illegal content for example indecent images or videos of young people under 18, contact your local police or report it to [CEOP](http://www.ceop.gov.uk).

Would you like to forward this information to a family member, friend or colleague? [Click here to view and print](#)

b. Grooming

You've probably heard of the term 'grooming' before. In essence, this is a process used by people with a sexual interest in children to attempt to engage them in sexual acts either over the internet or in person.

Sadly, these people do attempt to make contact with children over the internet; this may be in social networking sites, chat rooms or games. They could be by pretending to be someone else, or showing an interest in them.



It is important that children understand that people like this exist and that they should never do anything online or offline that they are uncomfortable with.

Grooming is a process of manipulating a child to gain control over them; as a parent or carer you should be approachable so that if your child is concerned about something, they know they can talk to you.

If you are concerned about someone's behaviour towards your child, you can report this directly to [CEOP](#) or *in an emergency, dial 999*.

[Click here for some tips on talking to your child about grooming.](#)

Would you like to forward this information to a family member, friend or colleague? [Click here to view and print](#)

c. Inappropriate websites

The Internet is open to anyone to post and create content so sometimes your child may see things they wish they hadn't, or access sites that are inappropriate for their age.

Inappropriate can mean different things to different people, from swear words to pornographic images or videos, and what is inappropriate for your child will also change as they grow and develop.

There are a range of things online that might upset children and affect what should be a healthy online experience. It's important to remember that inappropriate content online includes pornographic content, but could also include other content such as race hate, pro eating disorders or gambling sites.

If your child is using the internet, you should discuss the type of things they might see no matter what age they are.

Reducing the risks

The internet is not centrally moderated, but as a parent you can set controls on your child's internet access in the home.

[Parental controls](#) packages can enable you to block access to adult websites, such as pornographic and gambling sites.

Setting age appropriate controls on the sites they use and your network can help reduce the risk, but remember no filter is 100% accurate. Contact the provider of your internet package, such as Sky, BT or Talk Talk, the majority of service providers now offer free parental control packages. Make sure you do the same on your child's phone and all internet enabled devices.

Setting age appropriate controls is important but ensure that you also have an ongoing conversation with your child about content online. Ask them to tell you if you if they see anything that makes them feel uncomfortable or upset, so you can help and support them.

Online pornography

Children may stumble across content online or actively search for sexual content which isn't appropriate for their age. It is natural for children to push boundaries and explore, however, it can be risky. Online it is easy to quickly access a wide variety of pornographic content including hardcore and extreme images and videos.



As the researcher Martin Flood noted, 'pornography is a poor, and indeed dangerous, sex educator'. Pornography rarely presents sex in the context of a loving relationship and there is concern that early exposure to hardcore pornography could give young people unhealthy views about the opposite sex and what they can expect from them.

Though it may be difficult, it is important to talk to children and young people about pornography and how it can provide an unrealistic portrayal of sex and relationships.

Would you like to forward this information to a family member, friend or colleague? [Click here to view and print](#)

d. Losing control over pictures and videos

Pictures and videos can be copied, shared and spread at great speed. What may have started as being posted for a few friends can very quickly end up in the hands of the entire school and beyond. Some young people have posted or sent sexualised pictures of themselves to a boyfriend or girlfriend and found them shared further – see our film '[Exposed](#)' for more advice and information on this area. Some of the main risks with this type of image being in the hands of someone else include:

- **Bullying** – young people can be bullied by others about the content of pictures.
- **Distress** – knowing that other people they do not know are looking at personal pictures can be very upsetting.
- **Blackmail** – if the images end up in the hands of someone with bad intentions, they may be used to attempt to manipulate the child.
- **Reputation** – once something is online it is very difficult to remove. Images can become part of a young person's 'digital footprint' and potentially affect them in the long-term, such as if someone searches their name as part of a job interview.

e. Online reputation

Young people are growing up online and may be posting information which in the past would have been written in their secret diary. These thoughts, opinions and activities provide a window to their lives at a time where jobs and responsibility might be far from their minds.

The internet provides permanent records of these high and lows which, if not controlled carefully, may be accessible to future employers, universities or friends.

Young people should think about what they share, where they share it and who they share it with – what seems funny now, may not do in the future - [read more about sharing](#).

f. Overuse/ addiction

With limitless information, endless games and the ability to escape from the real world, young people's relationship with the internet can become unhealthy.

This can be a problem when a young person's online behaviour diverts and distracts them from other activities – this might be school work, seeing their friends or even sleeping and eating.



The amount of time young people spend playing games can become unhealthy. If they are gaming against people around the world, they may want to be involved in activities that take place at unsociable hours and may find it difficult to stop. The fact that other players are real people can put pressure on young people to take part as they don't want to let their gaming friends down.

Young people can be someone else online. Therefore, if they are unhappy in the real world, they may want to spend more time online.

As a parent or carer, you should be alert to the amount of time they are spending online and aware of the issues that might be causing a dependency.

g. Viruses, hacking and your computer's security

Computers are such an important part of our everyday lives now, so it is important to keep them healthy.

Get Safe Online provide lots of information on the risks posed to your computer's security and also how you can protect your computer from viruses, hacking and other nasties...! Visit www.getsafeonline.org for further information.



4. TOOLS TO PROTECT MY CHILD

What tools are there to help me keep my child safe?

As well as being involved in your child's life online, there are a number of tools that you can use to help keep them safe.

a. Technical Tools

Privacy settings and Parental controls

Privacy settings

Most social networking sites, like Facebook, now give your child a lot of control over what they share and who they share it with. Through a site's 'privacy settings' you are able to control:

- **Who can search for you** – this means that when people search your name on a site, your profile does not come up.
- **Who sees what** – this means that you can control the information you share, like your photos or 'wall' posts. You can usually restrict this to friends only, friends of friends, certain groups of friends, or everyone. We would recommend that for young people it is restricted to friends only.
- **Who can post information about you** – some sites enable others to 'tag' photos of you or share other information about you, like your location. Many sites enable you to restrict people's ability to do this.

It is important that you stay up-to-date with the privacy settings that your child uses and help them stay in control of their profile. For more information about privacy settings in Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/help/privacy>

Parental controls

As a parent or carer it can be difficult to monitor what your child is up to online. Most parents and carers trust their children online, but it can be easy for a child to stumble across things that might upset or disturb them.

Filtering and moderation packages are a good way to stop the majority of inappropriate and harmful content coming into your home. They are a tool to help you set and change online boundaries in line with your child's development.

There are some great packages out there, some are free and some come at a cost. Make sure you get one that suits your family's needs and budget.

How can this help me?

Every parental control package is different, but most provide services such as:

- **Filtering** – content to restrict access to particular sites, such as pornographic websites.
- **Time limits** – restrict the amount of time your child can be online, or set periods of time where your child can access certain sites.
- **Monitoring** – where you are informed of certain sites that your child is attempting to gain access to.
- **Reporting** – where you are provided with information about what sites your child has used.



Where do I get them?

There are three main levels for applying parental controls.

- **Internet Service Providers (ISP's)**. These are the organisations that pipe the internet to your home (like Virgin Media, Talk Talk, Sky and BT). All of the major ISP's provide parental control packages. These can allow you to apply controls across all of the devices that access the internet through your home connection – such as laptops or games consoles.
- **Devices that connect to the internet**. Most computers, mobiles and games consoles now come with parental controls that can be applied. For example, within Windows and the Mac operating systems, there are parental controls that can be set for individual devices.
- **Software**. There are a wide range of packages available to buy or sometimes download for free – always look for reputable companies and check out reviews online.

Does this make my child safe?

Parental controls will never make the internet 100% 'safe'. They should not be used as a substitute for communicating safety messages to your child. Make sure that you talk to your child about their behaviour online and remember, your home is not the only place they will be accessing the internet!

Never ask your children to set these settings, if you are not confident in putting these in place ask a family friend or the shop assistant to help.

[Click here to view videos from BT, Virgin, Sky and Talk Talk on how to activate free parental controls from their services](#)

BT

BT's Security package is called BT Family Protection. This lets you choose the right level of protection for each child on up to three computers in your home. With this service you can:

- **Block websites** – stop your kids from seeing inappropriate content
- **Set time limits** – manage how long your children spend online
- **Get instant alerts** – get email or text alerts when your kids try to view blocked sites or post confidential information
- **Social networking tools** – control the use of social networks like Facebook and Twitter and set up text alerts if personal information is posted
- **YouTube filtering** – a unique technology to prevent exposure to unsuitable content
- **Usage reports** – review your children's online activity from anywhere in the world

As well as parental controls, you also get:

- **Advanced spam filtering** – with image blocking to protect children from offensive content
- **BT Cleanfeed** – blocks sites classified as illegal by the Internet Watch Foundation



- **Access to our internet abuse prevention team** – for children or parents to report any concerns

A user guide for the BT Family Protection service is available and videos on the service are also provided.

Talk Talk

Talk Talk's Internet security service is called HomeSafe. Built into the broadband network itself, HomeSafe is designed to help you block every device in your home from websites you've defined as unsuitable for your home. Parents also have the option to control the after school homework routine specifically. It's been developed in partnership with their panel of parents and online safety experts.

A guide to setting up HomeSafe is available as are videos for this service.

Virgin Media

Parental Controls is part of Virgin Media Security and is available for free to all Virgin Media broadband customers. With Virgin Media Security's Parental Control you can:

- Screen out offensive material
- Filter sites by pre-defined age categories
- Add exceptions or block specific sites
- Control access to specific content types like chat or social networking
- Set an access-schedule for individual users
- See a history of sites viewed, including those that were blocked

Further information on this service and a guide on how to set up parental controls is available.

Plusnet

Plusnet offer Plusnet Protect Internet security. With this service, either offered free or for a small charge dependent on your Broadband package, parents and carers are able to set safe boundaries for children with parental controls.

Advice on how to set these controls is available.

Sky

Sky offer McAfee Internet Security suit, available free or for a small monthly charge dependent on your Broadband package. Parental Controls are included in this package, however all Sky Broadband customers can get McAfee Parental Controls on their own as a separate download, free and for up to three PC's.

McAfee's Parental Controls help control when your children can be online, monitor/control what websites they can visit, and keep an eye on their online activities.

Further information on Sky's security packages and a free download of the McAfee Parental Controls is available.



Gaming

- [Xbox](#)
- [Playstation](#)
- [Wii](#)

b. Reporting Tools

Has someone made you feel weird or uncomfortable online?

It could be sexual chat, being asked to do something that makes you feel uncomfortable on webcam or someone asking to meet up.

Talk to someone you trust

If there is an adult you trust and feel you can talk to, like a teacher or family member, you should let them know what's happened.

Report to CEOP

We can help and protect you. If someone has acted inappropriately online towards you or someone you know, you can report it directly to CEOP. It could be sexual chat, being asked to do something that makes you feel uncomfortable or someone asking to meet up.



Need someone to talk to?

You can talk to Childline about any problem you are worried about. They are available 24 hours a day and can talk to you in confidence. The number won't appear on your phone bill. You can call them for free on 0800 1111 or [visit their website](#).



Are you being bullied?

If you are being bullied and need someone to talk to, you can find someone to talk to at [Cybermentors](#), where there are people your own age and counsellors ready to listen and help.

Remember, you can also always talk to someone at [Childline](#).



Worried about viruses, hacking and your computer's security?

Being the victim of online crime can be as distressing as real-world robbery. Learn about the real risks and understand the urgency of protecting yourself at [GetSafeOnline](#).





Want to know more about...

- [What's new online?](#)
- [Staying in control on the internet and your phone?](#)
- [What you can do about bullying?](#)

Need immediate help?

Do you need immediate help or have a real emergency? If so call 999 or contact your local police here:

- [In England or Wales](#)
- [In Northern Ireland](#)
- [In Scotland](#)

When should I report to CEOP?

We help children stay safe online. Has someone acted inappropriately towards you online, or to a child or young person you know? It may be sexual chat, being asked to do something that makes you feel uncomfortable or someone being insistent on meeting up. You can report it to us below.

Remember if you need immediate help call 999



Other people who can help

For advice and to seek help on a range of issues, from hacking to cyberbullying, [click here](#).



c. Education Tools

Go to the movies

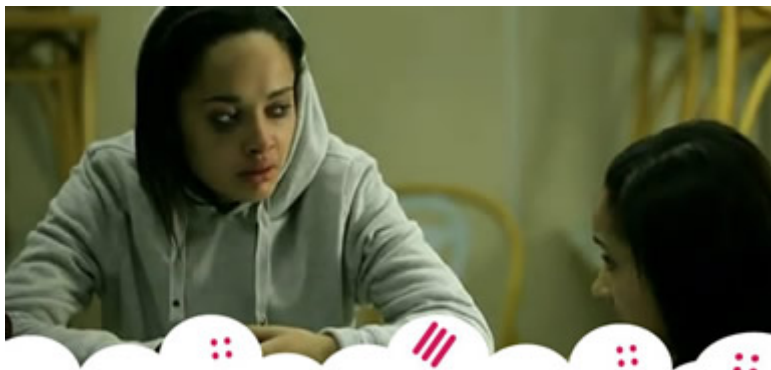
Your child may have watched one of our Thinkuknow films at school; they are a great way to start conversations with them about what can happen online and what they can do about it.

The films may also be a good way for you to learn about some of the pressures young people may face, what can go wrong and what you can do about it.

Ask your child if they have seen any of the films below and why not sit down and watch one together and discuss the topics. We would recommend that you watch the film on your own beforehand so that you're aware of the topics it covers.



[Watch Consequences](#)



[Watch Exposed](#)



[Watch Matt Thought He Knew](#)





5. TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT- WEBCAMS

As you may have seen in the media, the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) has recently warned of a concerning increase in sexual offending on the internet involving webcams.

Webcam abuse

CEOP have investigated a number of cases in which sex offenders have used extortion to force young people to perform sexual acts on webcam.

Typically online sexual extortion happens in the following way:

- An offender makes contact with a young person. This can happen anywhere online, including on a social network, in a chatroom, in a game or even on their mobile.
- The offender begins a conversation and tricks the young person into sending them an indecent picture, appearing naked or performing sexual acts on webcam. They trick them in a variety of ways including: pretending to be a girl or boy of the same age, pretending to be someone the child knows, flirting with them or sending them sexual pictures or videos.
- The offender records the webcam footage. They then threaten to share the video with the young person's friends or family if they don't perform more sexual acts. Some young people have been threatened for money or told to hurt themselves.

This has happened to hundreds, potentially thousands, of young people in this country.

This is sexual abuse. The emotional impact can be devastating. A number of young people have attempted suicide as a result of finding themselves in this situation.

To help prevent further harm, CEOP are calling on parents and carers to talk to their children about this type of crime and to support them to come forward should they find themselves in difficulty.

It's great to take an active interest in your child's life online and we'd encourage you to talk openly with them about the things they do. 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.

To start a conversation with your child you could tell them that you understand that some young people share sexual images and that you're interested to know what they think about it. We have also developed a fact sheet that you can share with your child with top tips on how they can *Stay Safe on Screen*, which you can download [here](#).



What to do if this happens

If your child were to tell you this has happened, your response as a parent will be crucial in helping them cope. It is important to take it very seriously whilst reacting calmly. When a child tells a parent they have experienced sexual abuse parents should:

- Believe their child and tell them that they believe them
- Not blame them for the abuse they have suffered.
- Tell them it's not their fault. Even if they have engaged in risky behaviour, the only person responsible is the offender.
- Not display anger or rejection – even if they are feeling these things parents should work through them in a separate place
- Talk to their child about how they feel and let them know that they're here to listen.
- Report to CEOP. CEOP is a command of the National Crime Agency, and is dedicated to tackling the sexual abuse and exploitation of children and young people. CEOP is here to help young people (up to age 18) who have been forced or tricked into taking part in sexual activity with anyone online or in the real world. For information, advice and to report concerns directly to [CEOP's Safety Centre](#). If a child is in immediate danger please call the police on 999.
- Children can also get confidential help and support 24 hours a day by contacting ChildLine on **0800 11 11** or visiting www.childline.org.uk