

Safety online

It is natural to worry about children and young people accessing the internet. In most families it may be the children and young people that are more experienced or knowledgeable on the internet and social networking channels.

Using the internet is a balance. While it is important to understand the dangers of the internet, it is also a really useful tool for learning and staying in touch with friends and family.

Here are some measures you can take to minimise the dangers for your child:

- Browse the internet together.
- Set limits on browsing so they can only access the internet in certain rooms or at certain times.
- Use parental control settings. This is usually done through your internet provider or search platform.
- Install specialist software that blocks access to certain content and can record attempts to access particular sites.
- Talk to your children about the risks of the internet and how it's important to keep certain materials private. It might be useful to explain how what they share online, (including on social media channels), can sometimes be visible to anyone.
- Agree on parameters with social media. For example, you may be happy for them to have certain social media profiles if you can follow it, have their password and/or their account is set to private.

Supporting someone you know

(information for parents and carers)

Tips on how to keep your children safe online, and some useful materials to help you have open conversations at home.



If an adult or young person displays one or more of the following signs around your child, your child may be at risk:

- Gives unwanted physical attention to a child.
- Is controlling with a child.
- Intrudes upon a child's privacy or personal space.
- Insists on separating caregiver and child.
- Uses inappropriate language with a child.
- Bullies a child.
- Shows an inappropriate interest in the sexual development of a child or teenager.
- Initiates overnight stays without parents or carers present.
- Gives a child money or buys them gifts for no reason.
- Makes excuses to spend time with a particular child or shows favouritism.

What to be aware of in children:

- Children showing reluctance or signs of fear around particular people or places.
- Nightmares, sleeping problems, fear of going to bed, and/or bed wetting.
- Change in play habits or signs of sexualised behaviours with toys or objects.
- Becoming secretive or outbursts of anger.
- Struggling to concentrate at school or a reluctance to attend school.
- Seeming unsettled at home.
- Fear of being touched.
- Becoming withdrawn or fearful of being left alone.
- Signs of self-harm, cutting themselves, pulling hair out etc.
- Changes in eating behaviours.
- Personality changes or signs of low self-esteem.
- Physical signs, such as unexplained soreness, bruising, and/or Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).



What to be aware of in older children and teenagers:

- Becoming depressed, low mood.
- Not attending school or going missing.
- Self-harming behaviours.
- Developing eating problems.
- Alcohol or drug abuse.
- Reduced contact with family, friends or professionals.
- Being sighted in unusual places.
- Becoming secretive about friends, money or mobile applications.
- Unexplained healthcare appointments.

In order to protect our children, it is important that we create conversations with them about sexual violence and explain that they have support in place if they do need to talk to someone. As parents and carers of children and young people, we need to be aware of potential risks, indicators of abuse and how to deal with disclosures. This includes understanding where to find local specialist support which you can do via our website:

www.sexualviolencesupport.co.uk

Raising the subject of sexual violence with children and young people

1. ThinkUKnow has a series of useful resources and information about staying safe when using your phone, tablet or computer. Their resources are aimed at children aged 4 to 14 years old. **www.thinkuknow.co.uk**
2. The NSPCC campaign called The Underwear Rule is designed to help parents keep their young children safe from sexual abuse and to understand that their body belongs to them. Their website provides lots of tips and advice on talking about the topic. **<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/pants-underwear-rule/>**
3. There are also some useful links on our website on how to bring up the topic of sexual violence and healthy relationships with children and young people. Go to **www.sexualviolencesupport.co.uk** to find out more.

