Wise up to the Web

Safeguarding Children & Young People in a Digital World
An informational booklet for adults

Recent advances of the internet, mobile phones and other electronic technology has made access to information and communication increasingly easy and cheap for everyone. SAFEcic's research with 200 young people aged 10-13 years showed that 98% of young people can access the internet at home and that, in addition to research for homework, the majority use social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter; along with playing games and downloading music and videos.

Many parents and carers struggle to get to grips with the concept and scope of electronic communication, especially the internet; and find the risks their children may face even more difficult to understand.

This booklet has been written in response to parents' and carers' questions during SAFEcic's internet safety work and aims to give a brief overview of what the risks are for children and young people, the steps parents and carers may take to keep their children safe and how to deal with concerns should they arise.

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What are the risks?

Our research showed that amongst 200 young people, there had been:

- One death threat which had been dealt with by police
- Two cases of serious bullying where a girl's identity had been misused maliciously
- Adults who have had adverse comments posted on the internet by young people
- Twenty students who had met a new internet 'friend' for real, without telling anyone where they were going, nor taking anyone with them

    and

- Ten of those new 'friends' did not look like the students thought they would.

Other risks may be:

- Accessing age inappropriate, violent, sexual, suicide, anorexia or illegal websites
- Receiving unwanted or upsetting text or email messages or images
- Being groomed by an adult with a view to meeting a young person for their own illegal purposes including sex, drugs or crime
- Viewing or receiving socially unacceptable material such as inciting hatred or violence
- Children and young people ignoring copyright law by downloading music, videos or even home work cheat material
- A child or young person sending bullying messages or posting malicious details about others
- Children or young people sharing explicit text messages or photos with other children and young people this is know as 'Sexting'

What might concern you?
A child or young person who:

- Is becoming secretive about where they are going to go or who they are meeting
- Will not let you see what they are accessing online
- Using a webcam in the bedroom or other closed area
- Accessing the web or using a mobile for long periods late at night
- Clears the computer history everytime they use it
- Receives unexpected money or gifts from people you don't know.

What might concern you?
An adult who:

- Befriends a child, children or young people on the internet or by text messaging
- Has links to unrelated children or young people on their facebook or other social network sites; especially if they work in a position of care such as teacher or youth worker
- Is secretive about what they are doing and who they are meeting

Steps you can take:

- Talk to your children about what they are using, ask them to show you how everything works so you understand as well
- Encourage your child to leave their mobile or tablet, etc. on charge in a family area when they go to bed
- Discuss the risks of giving out personal details online and look at the privacy settings on your child's online accounts
- Talk about how people can be anyone they want to be online: by using misleading email addresses, photos of other people, telling lies about their age, school and hobbies
- Encourage your child to think carefully about the photographs and videos they put online. They can be used and tampered with by other people, or they may not be appropriate
- Advise them to only text, chat or webcam with people they know in real life
- Learn together how to identify spam messages and how to delete them. This also applies to messages from people they do not know.
- Discuss how people hide their identities online and the importance of never meeting new online 'friends' for real
- Make sure your children understand they can always talk to you about anything that makes them feel uncomfortable
- Look on the internet together for the information about how to deal with or report a problem
- Use a general family email address without the child's specific name
- Talk about how, when information or images get on the internet they can never be erased

Contacts for referring

If you think a child or young person might be in imminent danger:
<u>Always</u> dial 999 for the police

If you are concerned about the welfare of a child or young person, ring your local social services. The number can be found at www.safecic.co.uk by following the link to your local Safeguarding Children Partnership/ Board/Committee

For concerns about an unknown person's online sexual behaviour intentions, report it to CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) at www.ceop.police.uk/safe-centre/

For reporting harmful content, including child sexual abuse images on the internet world wide contact the IWF (Internet Watch Foundation) at www.iwf.org.uk

You can also contact the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) on 0800 800 500

Young people can get help and advice from Childline at www.childline.org.uk or 0800 1111

For advice about concerns including bullying and hacking, you can visit www.thinkuknow.co.uk

For technical support, you can contact your local retailer, technology manufacturer or internet/network provider