Social media is a way of life for many people these days. Learning how to use the internet safely is an important skill for 21st Century living.

As children, we are taught how to cross the road safely, an important life skill which we then go on to teach and role model to our children. It is therefore key, as with crossing the road, that we role model **good online behaviour** as well as teaching our children these skills and boundaries.

The internet is a fantastic tool with limitless opportunities and can be used to keep children safe but it is also global, fast and anonymous and can leave families vulnerable to risks. Follow our guide to help you become a safer parent online and in turn teach your children to become safer online too.

PARENTS CAN BE GROOMED AS WELL AS CHILDREN

THINK Are people who they say they are?

Why are they interested in you and your family?

ACTION **Be mindful** that groomers can use many methods to access children and that parents can unwittingly be targeted. Groomers try to create a personal link to build trust. This could be through developing relationships with parents or using the information you provide, for example sharing why you are upset to celebrating your child's latest achievement. If you think your children are being groomed report to CEOP and the police.

AVOID Having your child's name visible. Try not to post personal details which can identify you or your family such as the school they attend, your children in school uniform, your phone number, your address, your relationship status, where you regularly hang out and where your children go, especially if unsupervised.

ONLINE TV / STREAMING

THINK How easy could it be for your children to access inappropriate material?

ACTION Be mindful of what online streaming services your children use; BBC iplayer/ ITV player, Netflix, Amazon Prime, YouTube, games consoles as they may contain unsuitable content for children.

Set parental controls on each online streaming service (See The UK Safer Internet Centre website). Teach your children to come to you if they see something upsetting or inappropriate.

Set limits and monitor how long children are watching online T.V.

AVOID Leaving children unsupervised for prolonged periods of time as not all content and ads will be age appropriate.

CONTROL OF DATA

THINK How would you feel if your personal information became public for all to see?

ACTION Consider who is your actual audience for photos and personal information. It may start out as your family but how much control do you have if it is shared and goes out wider?

Role model and teach your children that not all information is private and that liking and sharing information may make it more public than intended.

What control do you have?

You can unfollow, remove and block friends and followers. You can report posts you feel are inappropriate. There are checklists available to help you with this on the UK Safer Internet Centre Website.

AVOID Oversharing information - who really needs to see it and what is important to share?

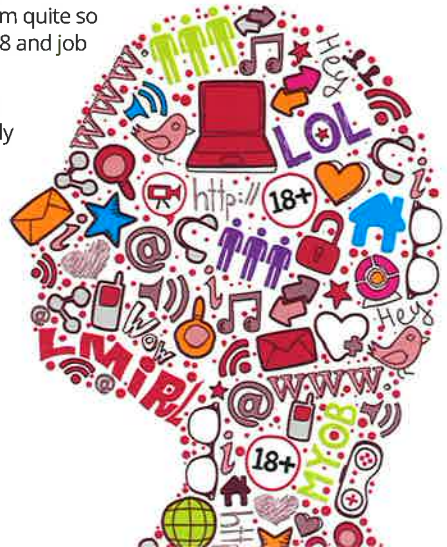
CONSENT AND CONCERNS

THINK How much control do your children have over what is being posted, by whom and where and what is the impact of that?

ACTION Think about the long-term impact of sharing children's images and personal information, for example, the embarrassing photos of an 11 year old might not seem quite so funny when they are 18 and job hunting.

Teach your children to recognise from an early age, the funny feeling they get if something doesn't feel right, (a knot in their tummy, feeling worried or embarrassed) or if they see something they don't like, to come and tell you, an older sibling or another trusted adult.

AVOID Posting images of other people's children without asking permission first.



INAPPROPRIATE COMMENTS AND BEHAVIOUR ONLINE

THINK How might you feel if negative or inappropriate comments were posted about your family for everyone to see?

ACTION Role model to your children to be respectful online as well as offline.

Just as we explain to our children, pause before you post, think about your digital footprint, it is there forever.

Many employers will check social media accounts when interviewing for jobs.

Try to resolve incidents offline rather than online.

AVOID Saying things that you wouldn't normally say face to face as well as posting images, jokes, comments that might shame, bully and embarrass.

SHARING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

THINK Who has access to your information and how can this be used to target you?

Things to consider when sharing:

- Don't share intimate details about your life and your children or share intimate photos such as bath time.
- Are you posting your location and where you are? What might be the consequences of this?
- Consider the content you post. Is it appropriate for your friends list?

ACTION Visit the UK Safer Internet Centre website for information on privacy settings on devices such as smart phones, games consoles and tablets and things to consider when purchasing. In the parent/ carer's section you can also find information about privacy settings for the most popular social messaging sites.

ONLINE GAMING

THINK Who can access your children online through online gaming?

ACTION Be aware of who your children are talking to online. Who are their online friends and do you know them? Ask them which games they are playing and where they talk with other players.

Remind your children about respecting other players and to tell you if they see anything abusive or inappropriate or are asked by a player to move to a different or private site.

Check privacy settings on all devices including games consoles and all devices.

AVOID Leaving 18+ or age inappropriate games around or play them in front of younger children.

VIDEO MESSAGING

THINK What can people see behind you and how can it be used as a way into your family?

ACTION Keep your background neutral when video messaging people you meet online.

If you are not using your webcam cover it up e.g use bluetack.

AVOID Having your children running around naked or with little clothing on in the background. Think about the photos, trophies and certificates displayed, these are all items that can be used by groomers to build trust and gain a window into your world.

ONLINE DATING / CONTACT WITH STRANGERS ONLINE

THINK If you don't know them why do they want to get close to you and your family?

ACTION Be mindful of those who engage with adults to gain access to children, you may unwittingly expose your children to a range of child protection issues when you allow them access to your world. Am I putting my children at risk by starting a new relationship online?

Exercise caution with new friend requests and friends of friends messaging you. The internet can facilitate predatory behaviour. False identities are easy to create and people aren't always who they say they are.

Keep your online dating profile about yourself. Online dating sites are 18+ so there is no reason for other adults to get any information about your children.

AVOID Giving out too much personal information about yourself or insight into vulnerabilities.

Don't post your children's information that can be used as a way in to your family, including having your child's photo on your profile photo.

ADULT SITES / PORNOGRAPHY

THINK What might be the consequences of children viewing adult images and content and how can adults access children? Adult content is 18+ as this content is unsuitable for children.

ACTION Children can be curious by nature so remember, if you are visiting adult sites be mindful of your internet history, children at any age could also easily access this accidentally. Delete your history.

Have a conversation with your children about what constitutes healthy sex and relationships so if they do see pornography they are less likely to have a skewed view on how realistic it is.

AVOID Viewing adult material on family devices.

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.nwgnetwork.org

NWG is a national charity network for professionals working on the issue of child sexual exploitation (CSE) and trafficking within the UK. We also offer support, advice and training. Our website contains up to date information and resources on CSE and trafficking.

www.saferinternet.org.uk

In the parents/carers section you'll find parental controls and filters for each of the main providers as well as up to date information about apps and services.

www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre

Reporting tools about online abuse and information.

www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents

Internet safety information for parents.

www.nspcc.co.uk/parents

Information on online safety, CSE, share aware and help with setting up parental controls. O2 guru can help with setting up controls.

www.iwf.org.uk

Contact them to remove indecent images of children.

www.paceuk.info

Supporting parents affected by CSE through information, empowerment, guidance and support.

www.mariecollinsfoundation.org.uk

The Marie Collins Foundation offers support and recovery services to children and their families who have suffered abuse online.
Tel: 01765 688827 or email: help@mariecollinsfoundation.org.uk

GET IN TOUCH

For information about NWG please call **01332 585371** or email **network@nwgnetwork.org**

NWGNETWORK.ORG

NWG. Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation.
Registered Charity No. 1125632, Company No. 6557851

ONLINE: ONGUARD

A GUIDE TO BECOMING A SAFER PARENT ONLINE

nwg

Professionals Online Safety Helpline

In collaboration with the UK Safer Internet Centre