

Online Safety advice for parents and carers during Covid 19

Many families will be encouraging their children to make good use of technology while we start the second week of lockdown with no opportunities to see their classmates “in real life”. Technology can help us all stay in touch safely but parents and carers will want to make sure that their children are as safe as possible.

Parental Controls

Almost all devices allow parental controls to be set. These can be adjusted depending on the ages of the children. They can:-

- Stop children putting new apps on a device until the parents approve them
- Reduce the chance of a child accidentally spending money on virtual goods
- Limit the time that children use a device without having a break

A good starting point is the internet matters website

<https://www.internetmatters.org/> , go to the SETTING CONTROLS section at the top!

Talking

Probably the best thing you can do to help your son or daughter is to talk to them regularly about how they use technology, which apps and sites they use and who their online friends are. Some children struggle with online relationships perhaps either sending or receiving hurtful messages. Parents and carers will be able to help guide youngsters through this difficult area. If children receive unpleasant messages these can usually be reported and each app or site will have a different way of doing this.

Apps and Sites

The list of apps and websites children are using grows by the minute so printed advice is likely to be out of date. In the UK the NSPCC have a site called Net-Aware <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/> which explains many current apps , the risks and the benefits of their use. More apps are listed on the American site Common Sense Media <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/>

Activities for Children

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/> is the website aimed at children and their parents from the National Crime Agency. It has lots of useful suggestions and advice on how to report issues. It also has games and activities including Jessie and Friends for the younger children and Band Runner for the older ones.

For the youngest children being tricked into sharing pictures can be an issue. LGfL have produced a lovely free video <https://undressed.lgfl.net/> which has some great advice and a very catchy song!

More Help?

The NSPCC have teamed up with O2 <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-we-do/about-us/partners/nspcc-o2-online-safety-partnership/> to provide advice to parents and have a free helpline on 0808 800 5002. They will also give support in any O2 shop – you do not have to be an O2 customer.

Children can call Childline on 0800 1111 for advice on anything that is worrying them.

Finally since 2015 it has been a criminal offence for an adult to send a message with sexual content to a child (This is Section 67 of the Serious Crime Act 2015). If you are concerned that this might have happened please contact The Police without further using the device. This will help ensure that evidence can be preserved. The Police can be contacted by phone or from the Thinkuknow website. <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>