

Friday 3 April 2020

To: All Parents/Carers/Guardians

Dear Parents/Carers/Guardians,

Now that the vast majority of school-age children are at home owing to school closures, it is important to make sure they are *safeguarded against online harms*.

Here are the three main reasons:

- **Having more free time on their hands** – as well as more time participating in distance learning – they are more vulnerable to situations such as stranger danger, stumbling across inappropriate content, being the targets of various forms of abuse or inadvertently facilitating malware.

- **Cybercriminals are exploiting the crisis** with a huge volume of emails, texts, social media posts and phone calls seeking to commit fraud or identity theft.

- **You have many other things to worry about:** safeguarding yourself and your loved ones in the physical world, protecting your income, and if you're normally office-based, trying to get used to working and meeting remotely and maintaining business as usual.

It is always important to do whatever you can to protect your children in the online world, but now, the risks have increased. Please take time to read the advice at getsafeonline.org/safeguarding-children to make sure they are protected as much online as they are from Coronavirus.

Remember: having regular, ongoing conversations with your children about what they're doing, who they're talking to and what apps they're using is equally important as tech solutions such as parental controls or ISP filters.

SANS – a globally-respected cybersecurity solutions and training provider, has made some of its valuable resources available free of charge in the face of the current Coronavirus pandemic. It's just over four minutes but could help you protect your child.

Advice if your child is under 5 years old

- Start setting some boundaries, even at this early age ... it's never too early to do things like setting limits for the amount of time they can spend on the computer.
- Make sure devices like your mobile, tablet or laptop are out of reach. Set up passwords/PINs and make sure you keep these details to yourself.
- On computers and any other devices your child has access to, set the parental controls to the appropriate age, and enabling access to only appropriate content.
- Buy or download parental control software, switch it on and keep it updated. There are many versions on the market, which work in different ways and available at a range of prices, starting at free.

- The big four Internet Service Providers (ISPs) give their customers free parental controls which can be activated at any time. Check them out and take advantage of them.
- Buy or download only apps, games, online TV and films which have age ratings, which you should check before allowing your child to play with or watch them.
- Share your technology rules with grandparents, babysitters and your child's friends' parents so that they know what to do when looking after your child.
- When using public WiFi – for example in cafés or hotels – remember that it might not include parental controls. Innocently letting your child play with your mobile or tablet while you're enjoying a latte may result in them accessing inappropriate content or revealing personal information.
- If you have a family computer or tablet, set the homepage to an appropriate website such as Cbeebies

Advice if your child is between 6 - 9

- On computers and any other devices your child has access to, set the parental controls to the appropriate age, and enabling access to only appropriate content.
- Buy or download parental control software, switch it on and keep it updated. There are many versions on the market, which work in different ways and available at a range of prices, starting at free.
- The big four Internet Service Providers (ISPs) give their customers free parental controls which can be activated at any time. Check them out and take advantage of them.
- Agree a list of websites your child is allowed to visit and the kind of personal information they shouldn't reveal about themselves online, such as the name of their school or their home address.
- Set time limits for activities such as using the internet and games consoles.
- Make sure your child is accessing only age-appropriate content by checking out the age ratings on games, online TV, films and apps.
- Discuss with your older children what they should or shouldn't be showing their younger siblings on the internet, mobile devices, games consoles and other devices.
- Discuss with other parents subjects such as what age to buy children devices that connect to the internet.
- Don't be pressured by your child into letting them use certain technologies or view certain online content, if you don't think they are old enough or mature enough... no matter how much they pester you or what their friends' parents allow.

Advice for 10 – 12 year olds

- Set some boundaries for your child before they get their first 'connected device' (mobile, tablet, laptop or games console). Once they have it, it can be more difficult to change the way they use it or the settings.
- Tell your child that it's very important to keep phones and other devices secure and well hidden when they're not at home, to minimise the risk of theft or loss.

- Discuss with your child what is safe and appropriate to post and share online. Written comments, photos and videos all form part of their 'digital footprint' and could be seen by anyone and available on the internet forever, even if it is subsequently deleted.
- Talk to your child about the kind of content they see online. They might be looking for information about their changing bodies and exploring relationships. They also need to understand the importance of not sending other people - whoever they are - pictures of themselves naked.
- Remember that services like Facebook and YouTube have a minimum age limit of 13 for a reason. Don't bow to pressure, talk to other parents and their school to make sure everyone is in agreement.
- Explain to your child that being online doesn't give them anonymity or protection, and that they shouldn't do anything online that they wouldn't do face-to-face.

Advice for 13 years and older

- It's never too late to reinforce boundaries ... your child may think they are adult enough, but they definitely still need your wisdom and guidance.
- You may be starting to think your child knows more about using technology than you do, and you may be right. Make it your business to keep up to date and discuss what you know with your child.
- Talk frankly to your child about how they explore issues related to the health, wellbeing, body image and sexuality of themselves and others online. They may be discovering inaccurate or dangerous information on online at what is a vulnerable time in their lives.
- Review the settings on parental controls in line with your child's age and maturity and adjust them if appropriate. They may ask you to trust them sufficiently to turn them off completely, but think carefully before you do and agree in advance what is acceptable online behaviour.
- Also talk frankly to your child about how they behave towards others, particularly with regard to what they post online. Be willing to have frank conversations about bullying, and posting hurtful, misleading or untrue comments. Make them aware of the dangers of behaviours like sexting and inappropriate use of webcams.
- Give your child control of their own budget for activities like downloading apps and music, but agree boundaries beforehand so that they manage their money responsibly. Don't give them access to your payment card or other financial details.
- Be clear in your own mind on issues such as copyrighted material and plagiarism so that you can explain to your child what is legal and what isn't.
- If your child has the technological know-how – and with sufficient influence from others – they could be vulnerable to experimenting with accessing confidential information from the websites of other people or companies. Hacking amongst this age group is very rare, but it does exist. Explain the dangers and consequences.

We hope this guidance will help to ensure that we are doing our utmost to keep our children safe online. For further information, please refer to the resources attached.

Kind regards,

Reach South Academy Trust

Family agreement

A great way to start positive family conversations around safe and responsible internet use, and to agree clear expectations and boundaries.

Things to consider

▶ Getting started

- What do we enjoy doing online?
- What apps, games and websites do we use the most?
- What devices, tech, toys or games do we have with internet access?
- Do we already have any rules about use of tech we want to include in our family agreement?

🕒 Managing time online

- How long do we spend on our devices?
- How does it feel when we use tech for too long?
- How do know when our screen use is interfering with family life?
- What can we do to help avoid overusing tech?

✈ Sharing

- What is or isn't okay to share online?
- What should we check before posting images and videos online?
- How do we keep personal information belonging to ourselves and others safe?
- Do we need a family email address to use when signing up to new accounts?
- Do we know how to use privacy settings and strong passwords, and why these are important?
- How can we use features like livestreaming and disappearing content safely?

🔍 Online content

- What can we do if we see something online which seems unreliable or untrustworthy?
- When is it okay to download files, games or apps, or click on a link?
- Do we know what the age requirements, or ratings, on the games and apps we use mean?
- Do we need any restrictions on making in-game or in-app purchases?
- Which websites are okay for us to use?

Use the questions below to help guide your conversations, focusing on those most relevant for your family.

Turn over the page for a template where you can record your agreements and expectations in writing.

💬 Communicating online

- Who can we talk/chat/play games with online? Do we only know them online, or offline too?
- How can we keep ourselves safe when communicating with people who we only know online?
- How can we be a good friend when we are online?

⚠ If things go wrong

- What can we do if we feel uncomfortable or upset by anything we see or hear online?
- What should we do if someone we only know online asks us for photos, to meet up, or to share personal information?
- Do we know where the report and block buttons are online?

✅ To finish...

- How could parental controls help our family?
- What will happen if one of us breaks the family agreement?
- When should we review our family agreement?

Once you've talked about your family's use of technology and the internet, think about what simple steps you can take going forward. We've given some examples for different ages below...

We agree to... (Under 11s)

I will use my tablet for ____ mins a day.

I will make sure the children's favourite games are bookmarked for them to get to easily.

Who is responsible for this?

Hannah and Izzy

Nan

We agree to... (Pre-teens)

I will tell mum and dad when I see something that worries me.

I will put parental controls in place but review it as the children grow up.

Who is responsible for this?

Tom, Ella and Yasmin

Mum

We agree to... (Teenagers)

I will make sure all my social networking sites are private.

I won't post photos of our children without their permission.

Who is responsible for this?

Amar and Yusuf

Dad

Family agreement

Use this template to put your agreement down in writing.
Why not display it somewhere at home like on the fridge or a noticeboard?

Who is this agreement for?

We agree to...

E.g. Be kind and respectful online.

Who is responsible for this?

E.g. We will all make sure we only post kind comments.

What happens if someone doesn't follow the agreement?

How long will our agreement last for and when will we review it?

Signatures

Top tips

- 1 Make sure that both adults and young people are open to changing their online behaviour as a result of your agreement.
- 2 Consider your tone. Are you focusing on negative behaviour or promoting positive behaviour?
- 3 Make sure your agreement works for your whole family and everyone is happy with it.
- 4 Review your agreement in the future to make sure it reflects the current needs and ages of your family.



Childnet
International

For further advice and resources, visit www.childnet.com/have-a-conversation

[@childnetinternational](https://www.facebook.com/childnetinternational) [@childnet](https://twitter.com/childnet)

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PARENTS & CARERS:

INFORMATION & ONLINE RESOURCES


1. Where can I get online safety advice?

 **Childnet Hot Topics** - a collection of advice covering topics like screen time, parental controls, digital wellbeing and live streaming - www.childnet.com/parents-hot-topics


 **UK Safer Internet Centre advice hub** - tailored advice for foster carers, adoptive parents, health care professionals and more - www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre


 **Tackling difficult conversations** - advice and resources on how to talk to children and young people about online safety issues - www.childnet.com/have-a-conversation

 **Keeping under 5s safe** - tailored advice for keeping under 5s safe online - www.childnet.com/under-5s

 **Digital Parenting** - a free online magazine offering information and advice on online issues - www.vodafone.com/content/parents

 **Ask About Games** - specific advice and online guides about gaming and PEGI age ratings - www.askaboutgames.com

 **Phone Brain** - information about paid for services such as premium rate numbers and in-app purchases - www.phonebrain.org.uk


 **Get It Right From A Genuine Site** - get to know which sites are legal for streaming and downloading films, music & games - www.getitrightfromagenuinesite.org

2. Where can I go to keep up to date?

Online resources

 **NetAware** - online guide and app with advice on popular online services, games and apps

www.net-aware.org.uk

 **Common Sense Media** - online advice and reviews for games, apps, films, books etc

www.common sense media.org

Socials

[@childnetinternational](https://twitter.com/childnetinternational)



[@childnet](https://twitter.com/childnet)



[@uk_sic](https://www.instagram.com/uk_sic)



[@childnetinternational](https://twitter.com/childnetinternational)



www.childnet.com



OUR PARENTS & CARERS HUBS



Childnet
International

The parents and carers pages offer key advice on a range of online safety risks

and detailed information on how and where to report online content www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers



UK Safer Internet Centre

The parents and carers pages offer an advice centre with detailed support for parents, foster carers and adoptive parents, health care professionals and many more. www.saferinternet.org.uk/parents

3. Where can I get more support?



Childnet need help - find out where to access support and report online concerns & risks

www.childnet.com/parents-help

Support for parents & carers

NSPCC

NSPCC - providing help and support for adults who are concerned about the safety or wellbeing of a child
0808 800 5000

O2

Let's keep kids safe online

O2 & NSPCC - providing help and support with social media, setting up parental controls, privacy settings and much more
0808 800 5002



family lives

Family Lives - providing help and support with all aspects

of family life
0808 800 2222

For advice: www.familylives.org.uk

YOUNG MINDS

Young Minds - providing help and support with young people's mental health and wellbeing
0808 802 5544

For advice: youngminds.org.uk

Support for children & young people

childline

Childline - providing help and support for under 18s

0800 11 11 or online: www.childline.org.uk

THE MIX

The Mix - providing help and support for 13-25 year olds

0808 808 4994 or online: www.themix.org.uk

4. Where can I get step by step guides and checklists?

A Parents' Guide to Technology
www.saferinternet.org.uk/parent-tech

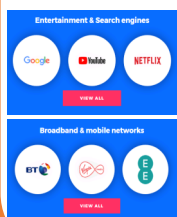
A set of guides highlighting safety



Internet Matters

www.internetmatters.org

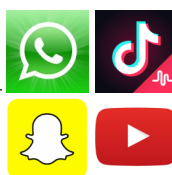
Step by step guides that will help you put in place parental controls on your broadband, phone, net-works and entertainment services.



Safety tools on social networks & other online services

www.saferinternet.org.uk/safety-tools

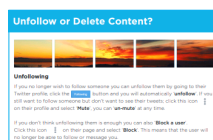
Find out more about the safety features available on popular social net-works and apps, like YouTube and WhatsApp.



Social networking checklists

www.saferinternet.org.uk/checklists

A set of guides to help you use safety and privacy features of popular social networking sites like Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter.



Childnet Family Agreement

www.childnet.com/family-agreement

The Childnet Family Agreement provides a framework for setting out expectations for online behaviour and usage.



How to restrict in-app purchases

www.childnet.com/restrict-in-app-purchases

Find out how to restrict in-app purchases within app stores like the Apple App Store and Google Play.



6 Top tips for supporting your child online

1 – Have a conversation and get to know what your child likes to do online and how going online makes them feel. Visit our www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers for conversation starters.

2 – Establish boundaries and routines for the whole family when using technology and going online. This could include where devices are kept, how long they are used and when.

3 – Be clear on strategies your child can use if something worries or upsets them online. This could be how to get support, who to talk to or turning over the device and get help.

4 – Get to know the safety features on devices in your home. There are features on devices, wifi, phone networks and entertainment services. See the guides on the right for help.

5 – Be curious not furious. It can be really worrying if your child sees something unexpected or inappropriate online but try to remain calm whilst supporting your child. This reaction will help them to feel that they can come to you again.

6 – Keep the conversation going. It's important to keep talking about online safety. Find quiet moments together or use current news stories as a way of approaching the subject again.

5. Where do I go to make a report?



Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP) - A police agency tackling child abuse online, where you can report any concerns about the behaviour of someone online towards a child.

www.ceop.police.uk



CEOP's **Think U Know** website has information and resources for children and parents as well as a link to report any concerns.

www.thinkunkow.co.uk



Internet Watch Foundation - Part of the UK Safer Internet Centre, the IWF is the UK's hotline for reporting child abuse imagery found online hosted in the UK and internationally. www.iwf.org.uk



Childnet's 'How to make a report' - Reporting advice of where and how to make a report on popular games, social networks and video platforms. www.childnet.com/how-to-make-a-report



Report Harmful Content Online - Part of the UK Safer Internet Centre, this online tool will guide you through the reporting process for harmful content online. It can support you with reporting issues such as bullying or harassment, threats, impersonation, self harm content or pornographic content. reportharmfulcontent.com

