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**Online Safety – Parent/Carer Guide.**

Social networking is hugely popular. Many young people are sophisticated in the way they use social media apps and websites, but social media, like all forms of public communication, comes with some risks. Not all of these risks turn into actual problems; but by helping your child understand what the risks are, you can play a big part in preventing them from turning into something serious.

**What they might see or do?**

* Seeing or sharing of violent, sexual and pornographic content
* Inaccurate or false information and extreme views
* Promotion of harmful behaviours including self-harm, anorexia and suicide
* Over-sharing of personal information
* Actively or unintentionally getting involved in bullying or hurtful behaviour

**Who they might meet:**

* People who might bully, intimidate or frighten
* People posing behind fake profiles for:
* Mischief-making
* Sexual grooming and stalking
* Blackmail and extortion
* Identity theft and hacking

**How this could affect them:**

* Fear of missing out leading to excessive use or exaggeration
* Getting upset by things they have seen and being uncertain about what to do
* Engaging, or being pressured into engaging in more risky behaviour either by accident or by design
* Developing unrealistic, and perhaps depressing ideals of body image and gender
* Becoming subject to peer pressure or interactions that are intense or too difficult to handle
* Creating an online reputation that may create problems for them in the future

**Practical tips to minimise the risks –**

* Ask them to show you which social media apps they use and what they like about them.
* Explain how you can use privacy settings to make sure only approved friends can see posts & images
* Check if any of their apps have ‘geo-location’ enabled, sharing their location unintentionally
* Show them how to report offensive comments or block people who upset them
* Check ‘tagging’ settings so that when others are posting or sharing

 photos online, your child’s identity is not revealed. Also, get people‘s

 consent before sharing photos

 Encourage your child to come and talk to you if they see anything that upsets

 them

**Keep talking.**

* Encourage your child to think carefully about the way they behave online, and how they might deal with difficult situations.
* Remind them people may not always be who they say they are online.
* Why is it unwise to meet anyone in the real world that you’ve only ever met online?
* Even if you think your messages are private, remember that words and images can always be captured and broadcast.
* People present themselves differently online - do they really

 look like that?

* Be aware that screens, and especially being anonymous,

 can lead people to say things they wouldn’t say to

 someone’s face.

* What does being a good friend and a likeable person

 online look like?

**For more information:**

You can find out more about how children use social media, the apps they use, the risks they face, how to use privacy settings, and advice and tips about how to talk to your children at:

www.childnet.com/sns

www.internetmatters.org

www.nspcc.org.uk/onlinesafety

www.parentzone.org.uk

www.parentzone.org.uk](www.parentzone.org.uk)

www.askaboutgames.com

**To report a serious incident:**

Concerned about online grooming or sexual behaviour online?

Contact CEOP: [www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk/)

If you stumble across criminal sexual or obscene content on the internet you should report it to the Internet

Watch Foundation: www.iwf.org.uk

Or ring 101